

# LONDON SOCIETY.

JUNE 1881.

## OUR COLONEL'S STORY;

Or a Slip 'twixt the Cup and the Lip.

'You all knew Sandy McPherson?' said our Colonel.

'Intimately!' 'Perfectly!' 'As well as my own brother, sir!' most of us replied, though, if the truth be told, there was not a man at that mess-table who had ever heard of Mr. McPherson before. You see, it was the commanding officer who spoke, and it was always risky saying him nay when he expected yea.

'They used to call him, you recollect, "The Great Unwashed," a vulgar but appropriate *sobriquet*, nevertheless,' continued the chief. 'Great, on account of his burly and preciously ugly person; unwashed, by reason of his accredited scant acquaintance with brown windsor, spring-water, and the functions of the *dhirzees* and *dhobies*, i.e. tailors and washer-men of the land.

'On his coffee estate in the mountains, and among his undraped and unscrubbed coolies, this disregard for the comforts and conveniences of life went for nothing, perhaps it was even in keeping with the surroundings; but when he came down to this city, walked in its public gardens and esplanade, or showed with its swells at the band, his appearance was something too outrageous, and his brother K.C.B.s, meaning

Knights of the Coffee Berry, and not, as you might suppose, of the Order of the Bath, dressy men hereabouts, whatever else they are on their plantations, cast him completely into the shade by their get-up and gorgeousness.

'As for the spinsters and young widows of the station, by "Mars, Bacchus, Apollo, viroorum," as Colonel Damas in the play puts it, there was scarce one but who fought shy of admitting him into her presence as a morning visitor, much less as a suitor, though many of these blooming ladies were on the sharp look-out for the silken chains of matrimony, and Barkis—that is to say, McPherson—was, as they knew, willing.

'But, disadvantages of person and attire notwithstanding, he was a right good fellow, this same gentleman. He was honest, hard-working, thrifty, simple-minded; and from being a mere adventurer without interest, friends, or money, he had, self-helped only, saved up the bawbees little by little; had bought patch after patch, acre after acre, of virgin land; cut down its timber, cleared it, planted it; and now he had squatted down free from encumbrances on Ailsa Craig as he called his property, as pretty and as fruitful a small coffee estate

as could be found in one of the most picturesque districts of this lovely island.

'I wish that I could give you even a faint idea of the exquisite beauty of its scenery, as it stood on a range of lofty hills looking out on still higher mountains, clothed to their very summits with hoary forest-trees. I wish I could paint that mighty waterfall, almost beside the house, as it came rushing and tearing over beds and boulders of rock, tumbling with an incessant roar into a foaming river below. I would I were able to picture the slopes green with scented grass, the fields white at one season with the snowy blossoms, and at another red with the ripening fruit of the coffee-bushes, the towering crags glowing with bright tropical flowers, and the steep declivities verdant to their very bases with ferns and lichens. I can't do it, boys, and I won't try. All that I want to let you know is, that it was a deuced nice sort of a place, this habitat of the McPherson; and that to be settled there with one's household gods, and coffee selling at seventy or eighty shillings per hundredweight in the market, would pay a precious deal better than does her most gracious Majesty—God bless her!—and the command of this dear old corps with its unruly subs.

'So, no doubt, too, thought its owner as he lolled and smoked at his cottage-front and gazed at the silver bloom, or the ruddy cherries of his trees growing almost up to the very door. But it was a poor, ungarnished, comfortable, higgledy-piggledy sort of a homestead that same dwelling-house; for, whatever else friend Sandy had done towards the beautifying and fertilising of his land, his roof-tree, like his wardrobe, had been utterly neglected.

Both wanted just exactly what he thought they did—the wife element to set them ship-shape and presentable; and, as you have heard before, for that desideratum he was on the *quiver*.

'Now you young gentlemen who are in the habit of lawn-tennising, afternoon teeing, talking, spooning, walking, driving, with all the feminines, plain and coloured, of this place, and who think that you have only to ask and be received,—which I beg and entreat you will not put to the test, cutting up the mess and so on—can't perhaps realise to yourselves the difficulties the worthy I am speaking of had met with in even this overstocked matrimonial emporium. The Anglerfalls, the Hunters, the Hookers, lots of girls whom I will not name, had snubbed or turned up their pretty noses at him when he came a-wooing; and so, *notens volens*, he remained a bachelor, anathematising his ill-luck, and venting his disappointments upon the backs of shirking and recusant Tamil coolies, the recognised natural enemies of coffee and the scape-goats of its cultivators.

'Then as a last resource he sought, from his brethren of the berry around, counsel as to the most advisable method of getting the so-needed helpmate; and the first man he consulted was Herr Thaler, a successful and rich German whose estate bordered on Aileen Craig.

"So, so!" said that personage. "Zere is noting more easy. Zave off zat ragget beard, burn in ze fire zose old clodes not fit for 'Ounds-ditch or any Juden Strasse, buy von big tob, mein frend, get zome Europe-muster coats, and zen return to ze fräuleins and vidder-fraus vid ze monish-bags in ze 'ands. If zey vill not 'ave zon,

sey will take ze rupee; trost 'em for zat, my zon."

'But the recommendation was unpalatable, and to a great extent impracticable, so another *fidus Achates* was appealed to, one Jack le Geste, a man much addicted to chaff and practical joking.

"In this land of pearls and precious stones, no go, dear boy," said Mr. le G. "From Dondra Head to Point Calamere—north, south, east, west—the women won't look at you; that you have found out long ago. Give up hunting, then, in these oft-trod colonial fields, and draw the home covers. Don't you happen to know any bonny lassie in your own 'Caledonia stern and wild,' or a pretty colleen in the aisle of shillelahs and shamrocks, who would be glad to share curry and rice with you? Go and try those parts; if not, have a haphazard shy at where I hail from, the Channel Islands. Spins—ay, and precious good-looking ones too—are as plentiful there as cocoa-nuts are here, and maybe one of them might be induced to clear out in your favour. Failing those islets, I know of no other dodge than indenting upon one of those co-operative associations which furnish everything, even to a better-half. But mind, old man, they keep a roster for foreign service in their offices: first lady on the list, pláin or pretty, first for duty; you pays your money, but you don't take your choice."

'But these suggestions also were considered infeasible, and put aside. Presently, however, a thought struck McPherson.

"Le Geste," said he, "when I was a boy there lived in the neighbourhood of my father's manse a widowed lady with two or three then wee, very wee, daughters. From what I can

recollect of them their means were cramped, not to say scanty, but they were of good blood and form. One of the children, the eldest if my memory serves me, was called Effie—Effie Needum, and promised to be bonny, for I can faintly recall her blue eyes, flaxen hair, rosy complexion, and jimp little figure. If she be alive she must be close on thirty; for it is many years since I came out here a stripling, and was Chinna Doray [*Anglicè*, little master] on the Paycock estate, as my kind employer styled that property. Mrs. Needum knew me well—better, indeed, than I knew her. I wonder if she and the bairns be in the land of the leal or the living."

"Write indirectly and inquire."

'And Sandy did so, and ascertained that his old acquaintances, Miss Effie included, were still alive, and proudly bearing up against the *res angusta domi*. Armed with which intelligence he once again returned to Le Geste.

"It is all right now, Mac," said he; "your course is as clear as day. Send a 'chit' to mater-familias N.; tell her that you are well-to-do in the world, own lands and cattle, men-servants and maid-servants; that you want to settle; that as a whipper-snapper you liked—no, better say loved—Miss Effie, and ask her in plain English to come out and marry you. Above all things, though, be sure and send your photograph; you are not such a very, very bad-looking chap, Sandy, if you would only dress like a Christian, and not like a coolie."

'So the letter was written, submitted to Le Geste's inspection, sealing, posting, and in due course was received by the Needums, in whose little household it created no small amount of astonishment,

and was much spelt and pondered over, especially by the damsel most concerned—still a comely if even a somewhat *passé* body—and who, after a while, consented to go out and wed her suitor.

"After all, mother dear," she said, "he has house and home for me; maybe, by and by, for you too, Jennie; and I'll do all I can to help you. It's the best thing for me. And really Mr. McPherson—or I suppose I ought to call him Alexander—is yet young and not bad-looking. Quite the contrary—very, very nice-looking; see the photo he has sent us."

"And Miss Jennie quite agreed with her elder sister that Mr. McPherson was a beauty.

"Well, my bairns," said the old lady, "I can't gainsay you but that the portrait is winsome and dounce enough; but as I call to mind the boy Sandy, the son of the minister, he was not nearly so seemly and well favoured. But it is, indeed, lang syne since I set eyes on him, and likely he has got handsomer as he got older; some men do."

"Then everything being settled, Miss Needum accepted her kismet, agreed to go out, and her lover—open-handed, honourable, true, as I have already told you he was—sent the wherewithal for passage and outfit.

"And pending the many, many weeks that elapsed, and while the good ship *Queen of Serendib* was sailing round the Cape for her destination, a change, a radical change, came over the life and habits of our bride-expecting friend. He cast into the limbo of things done with his coarse "cumlies," rough "dungarees," and other country clothing, and burst out into "Europe-muster" linen, tweeds, and serges. He purchased largely house furniture and nicknacks; he bought a

lady's horse and a Peat's side-saddle; he whose equine proclivities had never extended beyond a shaggy mountain pony, and a tattered and torn pigskin. He told his old flames and chums that he was going in for the Benedict, and bashfully listened to the "riles" and jeers of the one, and the chaff and laugh of the other.

"But, barring "The Great Unwashed" himself, no one was more taken aback at the course of events than Tamby, his long-serving "appoo" or butler. That functionary saw coolie after coolie arrive at Ailsa Craig with load upon load of unknown and unusual goods; and although in the "Lines," and other native resorts, he might have expressed his bewilderment, yet in his master's presence he reserved a stolid silence. But when one day a string of "bandies" (carts) drew up, and from beneath their leaf-covered tilts there were dragged out mats and carpets, sofas, chairs, tables, what not, then his apparent indifference and his "nigger" tongue could hold out no longer.

"Why master kick up all dis bobberee! What for he want all dese tings on wattie (estate)?" he inquired.

"A young lady is now on her way from Scotland to marry me, Tamby."

"Marry! Doray (master) going take wife after all dis plenty long time do too well widout?"

"Yes!"

"Den, master, please, I discharge you, sar. No my custom stop wid lady in bungalow. Master's missis come, master's appoo go. Master take choice."

"As the time for the arrival of the *Queen of Serendib* drew nigh, awful were the fidgets of our hero; and many days before it was possible for that slow and sure craft to reach her port, he



was there walking about with a big binocular in his hands, looking out seawards, and entreating all sorts and conditions of men for the very earliest news of her being sighted. The fact was that the rough seasoned old fellow was on the very tenterhooks of anxiety and expectation, as nervous as a schoolgirl, and behaving himself as such.

"Then at long last it was told him that the vessel was in the offing, was rounding the point, was at anchor in the harbour; and in the Master Attendant's boat, cushioned, flagged, and be-decked for the auspicious occasion, Sandy McPherson, Esquire, of Ailsa Craig, planter, rowed alongside "same like he Governor," the native spectators observed:

"Scrambling up the side, he took a hasty glance at the many passengers assembled on the poop; and, instinctively guessing that Miss Effie was not among them, he dived below, and confronted the stewardess.

"Miss Needum on board, and well?" asked he.

"Yes, sir," replied the matron; "and a very nice, good, kind, pleasant young lady she is, and I've taken the greatest care of her." She felt sure that the gent was Miss N.'s husband to be, and that there was money in his purse for a gratuity, notwithstanding that, according to the terms of the passage-money, stewards' and stewardesses' fees were included; a fiction, gentlemen, a pleasant fiction, which you will find out when you go down to the sea in ships.

"Take this card to her," said the pale and trembling gentleman. "I'll wait her coming up in that far corner of this saloon."

"Glancing at the pasteboard, the woman disappeared; and presently there ascended, step by

step, from the regions below, first a neat straw hat, trimmed with bright ribbons, beneath that hat a face somewhat worn with years and cares, but still fresh and comely enough; then a slight compact figure, draped in plain well-fitting garments, shawled, and ready for the shore. Miss Effie, in *propriâ personâ*, stood before her hand-seeker, blushing "celestial rosy red."

"He advanced from his coign of vantage to greet her; but as he drew nigher, instead of the warm affectionate welcome he looked for, there was a fixed stare, a shudder, a hasty retreat, and a loud scream which resounded from stern to stem of the big ship, and brought every one from decks and cabins into the saloon.

"Miss Needum—Effie, my dear girl, what on earth is the matter?" hurriedly stammered out the astounded Sandy.

"Shiver my timbers, what ails the lassie?" put in the captain. "Look out for squalls, if you've annoyed her!" And all the bystanders echoed the words in more or less threatening terms. She was evidently a favourite on board.

"O, take him away," cried the lady piteously,—"take him away from me some one! I don't know him! I've been misled, deceived! I can't marry him—indeed, indeed I can't! He is not Mr. McPherson who wrote to me, to whom I came out to be married! He is so ugly! O, such a dreadful fright! I'll return him his money! I'll work my way back to my poor mother! I'll do anything, but I can't be his wife! I'd rather die first!"

"Miss Needum, I don't indeed understand this," said the taken-aback and completely-flabbergasted one. "What does it all mean? Are we not engaged?"

Have you not come out of your own free will to accept the home and the love I offer you? Did I not send you my likeness?"

"No, no!"

"Surely I did. It was taken by Collodion, our best photographer; and when he gave it to me, he said, 'Mr. McPherson, sir, there is no flattery 'ere; your worst enemies would admit that.' Why, I myself put it inside the letter to your mother."

"I repeat, no—decidedly and emphatically no! Look at this," and drawing from her bosom a little locket, she opened it, and displayed the head and face of a younger, much handsomer, and in every outward respect a more lovable man than the scared one now before her. *It was the counterfeit presentment of Mr. Jack le Geste, and I leave you to imagine what McPherson thought when he saw it there.*

"How could it get into the locket, you ask? Why, in the simplest way in the world. That good-for-nothing fellow Le Geste, when Sandy's letter came into his possession, thought to "sell" him, and so had surreptitiously removed his *carte de visite*, substituting one of his own, and Effie had worn it ever since.

"The poor deil of a disappointed bridegroom pleaded hard, and tried every argument to induce the girl to let matters progress, but she was obstinate and determined.

"She would esteem and respect him always, but nothing more. To let the cat out of the bag, Miss Effie had fallen most desperately in love with the picture of her supposed Alexander, and in vulgar language had spooned over it awfully during the tedious and lone hours of a long voyage. Of

course, she imagined that it was her intended husband she was approving, or she would not have done it—certainly not.

"So, quite chap-fallen, and in the maddest of rages, McPherson returned to his estate.

"Arrived there, he cut from one of his coffee-bushes the thickest and knottiest of sticks, and proceeded with it in search of Le Geste; but fortunately, for the jester he had made tracks and was gone.

"He sought him that night, and he sought him next day, And he sought him about, till a week passed away; In *boutiques*, on "watties," in a lone jungle spot, McPherson sought fiercely, but found Le Geste not.

Very lucky, I repeat, for the undiscoverable one's bones.

"Then he reverted to his old customs and habits, sold his not now necessary goods and chattels, and thought as little as he could of the false Effie.

"A fickle and capricious creature, woman. Listen, gentlemen, to another exemplification of old Virgil's dictum.

"In the same ship in which, shortly after the breaking off of her intended espousal, Miss Needum sailed for England, there came on board, almost at the last minute, a slim, dark-haired, good-looking man, going home, some said for health; others, in fear and trembling of an irate Gael with a huge stick in his hands. Be this as it may, the health-seeker or the fugitive—take which you please—was no other than Le Geste; and to close my story, when the vessel touched at St. Helena for water and provisions, he and Effie went on shore and returned man and wife."

## ON READING BETWEEN THE LINES.

---

I WAS once much amused, on taking up a book of travels and experiences, on observing a satiric note addressed to the printer: 'These lines are to be spaced out widely, as there is much to be read between them.' Now there is certainly a happy art, never more needed than in these modern days, of 'reading between the lines.' There is an old proverb which says that we should believe nothing that we hear, and only half that we see. The ages of faith are over, in which 'that we saw it in print' was sufficient to assure conviction. Without actually going so far as to disbelieve what we read in print or manuscript, it is nevertheless true that something remains to be read over and above what we find in the manuscript or print. We may call it a gloss, or a marginal reading, or an interpretation; but, however it may be described, the process is assuredly that of 'reading between the lines.' Even in public writing how much there is of private reading! If you are reading a leading article, or a debate in Parliament, or even the report of a law-case, you may often detect the bias. The intention is to write up or to write down. Even City articles are not immaculate. Even friendly correspondence has its special aim. That is a very good direction to 'space out the lines widely, as there is much to be read between them.'

I remember once being very much struck by a literal instance of 'reading between the lines.' I was visiting a great scholar, one

whose name is deservedly high throughout the learned world. I found him after breakfast poring diligently over an ancient manuscript. Those strong glasses and those faded characters must indeed be trying to the eyesight. 'This,' said the great authority on ancient manuscripts, 'is a palimpsest.' He was literally 'reading between the lines.' It was the usual kind of thing. There had been some old skin covered with writing; and more parchment being required for further writing, this parchment had been washed and prepared for the use of another scribe. The former writing had not been obliterated; but the characters were faded and could only with great difficulty be deciphered. In order that he might write the more easily, the copyist had avoided the former traces of manuscript; and thus the ancient manuscript was legible 'between the lines.' It has frequently happened that in the scriptorium of the ancient monastery the monk has written down some wild worthless legend, such as we may read by the hundred in the *Acta Sanctorum*; and, to save expense and pains, has sacrificed some priceless text of Virgil or Cicero. To the best of my memory, in the case I am mentioning, it was a cursive manuscript of some portion of the New Testament, which itself might have been a copy of those big earliest manuscripts of old which were called the Uncial mss. Thus, through the simple process of literally reading 'between the lines,' one of the most valuable manuscripts in

the world may have been discovered. One of our poets has an interesting conceit of human life itself being a palimpsest. There is many a writing on our lives that memory can only faintly recall, and yet which is written as if with a pen of adamant and a point of diamond. Sometimes between the familiar lines of to-day we can discover tracings of the writings of far-off times, traces of thoughts and words and deeds which are forgotten, save for these sudden shocks of memory, but which have coloured and shaped the course of our lives.

It is curious to note how Messieurs the Novelists have introduced writing between the lines as a trick of their craft. I am one of those who think that *Monte Cristo* is a most delicious book, showing, as no other novelist had hitherto done, the poetry and privileges of wealth. Being at Marseilles the other day, I was much interested in seeing the *allée* in which *Mercedès* lived, and the *café* in which *Edouard Danton* was arrested. A friend once took me by the arm, in a most enthusiastic manner, down a certain street. 'In that street,' he exclaimed, 'Mr. Micawber used to dwell.' Imaginary personages are often more powerful than real personages. M. Dumas very neatly works in an incident of reading between the lines. The old abbé in the *Château d'If* relates how he found out the secret of the treasure buried in the island by rescuing the remains of a burned paper. He cunningly reads between the lines and is enabled to give an approximation to the actual writing. Mr. Wilkie Collins in the *Moonstone* makes a medical man take down some muttered ravings, from which, by a process analogous to reading between the lines, he constructs a coherent

whole. In a puzzle story such a trick is very useful.

Novelists do not disdain gathering up hints and tricks from one another. But I have known the same sort of thing happen on a small scale in domestic life. There was a very domestic lady—which means, as some one has shrewdly said, a lady who is very much like a domestic—who found that certain family secrets of her household had become the common property of her servants. It appeared that she had utilised some portions of her correspondence by turning them into 'spills' for the mantelpiece; and a cunning servant had pieced them together and contrived to 'read between the lines,' and so mastered some family matters concerning which her master and mistress had good reason to be reserved. So much for the prosaic literal practice of 'reading between the lines.'

In the matter of testimonials it is always as well to read between the lines. The testimonial is valuable not so much for what it says as for what it does *not* say. This is the case through the whole gamut of testimonials, from the gorgeous epergnes presented to one another by the members of some Mutual Admiration Society to the characters given to domestic servants. Once a celebrated man told me that he had been asked to give a testimonial to a gentleman whom we will call Mr. Anscombe, who was a candidate for a professorship in a colonial university. 'I only met Mr. Anscombe once in my life,' said our friend, 'and on that occasion he was in a state of beastly intoxication.' I hastened to observe that under such circumstances he could hardly be expected to give a testimonial. 'O yes, I did,' said the great man. 'I managed to put something together that would

serve his turn.' I presume that a character for sobriety would hardly be among the good points enumerated; but then, to be sure, that would be a matter that would hardly be looked for as requiring mention in the application of a man of learning for a learned professorship. And yet various sad instances might be given of very learned men being overcome by some very brutal vice. One might almost give a separate paper to this subject of testimonials. Occasionally they serve other purposes besides those of giving a character. The late Archdeacon Sinclair told the writer that when Sir William Hamilton was a candidate for a chair in the University of Edinburgh, in the gift of the Lord Provost and Baillie, Sir William came to the archdeacon in a state of great tribulation, and wished him to write a testimonial which he might lay before the civic patrons. 'They don't know anything about my writings, and have rather got the idea that I am an atheist.' The archdeacon wrote a very careful letter to the corporation, in which he cautiously explained to their collective wisdom that, so far from Sir William Hamilton's writings being atheistical, they had a precisely contrary tendency. Sir William won the chair, and I believe that Mr. Sinclair always considered that he had a very great hand in his getting it.

In this matter of the giving of characters there is generally a good deal of reading between the lines. In giving a character it is well to weigh and scrutinise every expression you use, as certainly your correspondent will not fail to weigh and scrutinise your expressions. There has been a great deal of unpleasant litigation in this matter of the giving of characters. If you give a character which the

servant considers unjust, the servant may bring an action; and if you give a character which the master considers unfair, I believe that the master may bring an action. Certainly when a bank has been induced to give credit to a customer on account of unduly strong recommendations, it has sought and obtained a remedy against the recommender. In reading a servant's character, if there is no mention made of honesty and sobriety, it is very possible that the omission may have been designed. It is thought the best policy—and it is certainly the safest, but not the most honest, policy—to maintain a prudent reticence on the point. It is one, however, on which a frank explanation ought to be sought and given. The object of language being, according to Talleyrand, to disguise our thoughts, the art of reading between the lines is the art of penetrating through this disguise. This is not only shown in such a matter as servants' characters, and the whole gamut of testimonialising, but also in the matter of diplomatic correspondence. In Talleyrand or Metternich we have probably to 'read between the lines.' Lord Palmerston confounded the diplomacy of Europe by really saying simply what he meant, a device which served to 'confound their politics,' and 'frustrate their knavish tricks.' If we look carefully through our correspondence we are often able to read between the lines. If, for instance, we get an invitation to dinner only a few hours before the dinner itself, we can hardly help seeing an intimation that our company is not very greatly cared for, and that we are probably asked in order to supply vacant space.

There are more serious occasions in which people scan the lines before them very carefully, in

order to see if there is anything to be read between the lines. For instance, if a man has made an offer to a lady, it becomes an interesting inquiry whether the 'No' by any process of ingenuity could be tortured into a 'Yes.' I know the case of a man who to such a proposal received an answer from the lady to the effect that she was already engaged, but that if such were not the case she could not have said what might have happened. The man read through the lines to some purpose, for he eventually married the lady. Sometimes in analogous cases there are expressions so full of pity and courtesy that the language is keenly scrutinised to see if there is any hope of a warmer feeling. Such scrutiny is often far from being in vain. The poet has told us that there is often only a very narrow space between pitying and embracing. How often, when a young fellow has fallen out with his people at home, he anxiously scrutinises the language of the governor to see if he shows signs of relenting, and perhaps the old folk are doing just the same to see if he is showing signs of repenting! Perhaps the college tutor has written to say that it is his painful duty to inform the parent or guardian of the young one's delinquencies. I confess that whenever a man writes to me about his 'painful duty,' I feel inclined to read between the lines and to construe the expression in the sense of 'savagely satisfaction.' 'Great regret' very commonly means 'great glee'; and when a man tells you that he has 'much pleasure' in forwarding you money, he probably does so with groaning and much grinding of teeth. So also in the phrases and courtesies of life, it is constantly necessary to read between the lines. There

are certainly cant phrases in which there is a great deal of affectation and no little insincerity. What a great deal of insincerity there is, for instance, in that expression 'thanks' when people are not at all thankful, and 'vastly' and 'awfully' really mean nothing! You commence your letter 'My dear Sir' to a person whom you detest, and you say to another 'Your obedient Servant' when obedience is the very last idea you have. You read between the lines, and not without a little satire and bitterness. It is the case in electioneering, in Parliament, in the making of books and speeches and reviews, that there is some motive more or less transparent. Macaulay makes the constituent say of the candidate,

'He asked after my wife who was dead,  
'And my children who never were born.'

I by no means object to the courtesies of life even when they are obviously insincere, for they at least serve the purpose of oiling the wheels of the machine, but at the same time only the bleary-eyed can fail to read between the lines.

Similarly in the reading of novels we have constantly to look between the lines. We need scarcely say that this is especially the case in reference to the novels of Lord Beaconsfield. Immediately he had published a political novel, one or more professed keys were at once issued. The best of it was, that each reader was at liberty to construct his own key. Every one was obliged to read *Endymion*, if only in self-defence; for whoever sat by your side at dinner would talk of nothing else, while the interest of the story was yet fresh. The remarkable point was, that no key could be accurate. It was the fashion of Lord Beaconsfield, so soon as he had completed a photograph, to blur it. It would offend against his code, perhaps



also against the code of good manners, to draw a portrait distinctly recognisable. This, however, is done with some completeness when Croker is described as Rigby, and Theodore Hook as Lucius Gay. Almost invariably, however, we have just a few lines before another description is interwoven, perhaps of a distinctly antagonistic kind. Nevertheless, between those few lines it may be possible to read a great deal.

It is remarkable for how many years Lever's novels were ignored by the London press. There was one London newspaper, however, which confessed that, 'amidst all the reckless extravagance, uproarious humour, and brilliant slapdash, they read *between the lines* of Lorrequer a power of description, an insight into character, a mine of thought, which one might look for in vain in works of far higher pretension.' Now this is one of the highest powers of criticism—to read between the lines; to detect real genius even amid extravagances. How unfortunate for the fame of Lord Jeffrey that he abused Wordsworth, and of Professor Wilson that he abused Tennyson—mainly from the want of capacity to read between the lines! You take up a poem or a play; critically you see a hundred faults, but there are lines which impress you at once as possessing the stamp of genius. It is the chief gift of a good editor or reviewer to read between the lines, and to discover the genius that is hid from the less critical and appreciative mind.

Even in pictures one may at times read between the lines. In the conventual church of Santa Maria della Concezione at Rome is Guido's magnificent picture of the Archangel Michael trampling on the devil. Now Guido had a great spite against Pope Inno-

cent X., and has drawn the Pope's portrait under the guise of the devil. A delicate stroke of satire is given in one of the pictures of the gentle Fra Angelico. It is a picture of the Last Judgment, and the condemned consist entirely of monks. Thus a skilful attack is made upon the whole hierarchy. There are many pictures the interest of which is greatly heightened when we know the personage in the portrait or the likeness that is introduced into the picture. We all know the picture of Lord Chatham fainting away in the House of Lords; but Lord Macaulay asserts that frequently when Lord Chatham had the gout, it was because he did not choose to face difficult questions in his place in Parliament.

It very often happens in practical matters we have carefully to read between the lines. The lines give us the letters, but we have to look 'between the lines' for the spirit and the intention. When the will of a testator becomes obsolete and impracticable, it frequently becomes the duty of a Court of Equity to read between the lines, and give the nearest effect to his will. For instance, there was a man who left a large sum to insolvent debtors. It is a popular idea that imprisonment for debt is abolished, and those who have the distribution of the fund now apply it to general charitable objects. But if it is sought to read rightly between the lines of the bequest, perhaps the money might be properly devoted to the many poor debtors who are again and again imprisoned by the county-court judges without being in the least degree released from their original liability. Similarly in respect to educational bequests bequeathed ages ago to our colleges and universities. No doubt,

if we read carefully between the lines, it was their intention to promote the objects that would best improve the intellectual and moral interests of the country. And herein lies the strength of the argument for the Endowment of Research. It may be argued that in our times the great business of life is not so much Greek and Latin, whatever may have been the case in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as the investigation of the phenomena of Nature, of that knowledge which is only hidden in order that men by searching may find it out. It may be argued that if we read between the lines of the great men who made the bequests, that they never intended men in the prime of life to lead an indulgent existence upon fellowships, but that they might be put in a position in which they could attain to the most profitable knowledge of their time. The Statute of Mortmain in some degree controls the domination of the dead hand; but if statesmen would read carefully between the lines, as they increasingly try to do, there would be little difficulty in reconciling the aims of legislators with the intentions of benefactors.

How often in human history and human character it becomes necessary for us to read between the lines! As one's experience of life enlarges, one sees more and more the perfect wisdom of the rule that tells us not to judge one another. Nothing, in an immense number of cases, is harder to judge than the moral quality of actions. The science of casuistry has been as much laughed away by Pascal as the style of chivalry by Cervantes. For instance, the same act which is mean in one man is generous in another. The average subscription of an English gentleman to any philanthropic or charitable object is precisely

one guinea. Now it is certainly true that there are a large number of people who subscribe their guinea, to whom the guinea is a mere feather's weight which they do not feel in the least. But I do aver that there are many people to whom that guinea is a serious object, and involves a direct sacrifice. It is not without a decided mental struggle that they resolved to persevere with the guinea instead of descending to the half-guinea. The difference may indicate not only the loss of some little luxury, but also the giving up of some necessity. Very often the man who seems to be mean is generous, and the apparently generous man is necessitous. I remember once seeing a circumstance mentioned in the paper, where, it appeared to me, that a great unintentional injustice had been done to very worthy people. A man had won the Derby. He stood champagne on every side to every one who would partake thereof. Not only that, but some one suggested that he should give something heavy to a charity, with which suggestion I believe that he complied. Then the newspaper writer went on to say that you often found in the patron of the turf a liberality which you would not meet in professedly benevolent and Christian circles. Now to this I demur. A man, even of large fortune, who makes beneficence an active duty, cannot do the sudden liberal act of another who has just won ten or twenty thousand on the Derby. Let us suppose the extreme case, which, however, is not so uncommon, that he habitually sets aside one-tenth of his income for pious and charitable uses. Such a man finds at the very beginning of his financial year that his tithe is absolutely mortgaged, that he has given away to the very limit of

his strength, and that he cannot meet any new demand without surrendering some object to which he is mentally pledged, or incurring some further sacrifice which is really beyond his means. Then the unreflecting observer, who has never practised himself in reading between the lines, terms the man who has performed a sudden act of solitary munificence so exceedingly liberal, and condemns the man of unobserved, punctual, persistent goodness as being in comparison illiberal and mean. Happily, the man of quiet unobtrusive charity has never accustomed himself greatly to regard the world's praises or blame. I believe that of all virtues justice is the last and most difficult to be learned, and the habit of reading between the lines is the most valuable auxiliary in moral training.

It is a habit which we are constantly called upon to exercise if we would correct false estimates, and have some sort of understanding of the varieties of human nature and individual character. That man who seems to wear his heart upon his sleeve, who shakes you so heartily by the hand, who is always so friendly and joyous, who gives you the fullest idea of frankness and fairness, may be only playing a part which health and prosperity make easy to him, and which may admirably serve his own purposes of popularity, or social influence, or sordid gain. Should you watch your man narrowly, being gifted with the art of reading through the lines, some awkward fact is sure to crop up, the index of the real character, which, as in the case of the palimpsest, underlies the apparent and more modern characteristics. Again, it is not uncommon for men who are truly liberal to carefully hide their liberality, that they may not be imposed on; and men of the

tenderest nature to adopt harsh forbidding manners to save themselves from being lacerated by the obtuseness or cruelty of others. If you bide your time, such quaint, impressive, hardly discernible writing will emerge, as if from invisible ink, between the conventional lines of the palimpsest. In long midnight talks in college rooms, or in lonely mountain solitudes, I have seen something 'between the lines' as hard as a cuneiform inscription, until the secret of the letters has been thoroughly revealed, and then has come the full flood of confidences and revelations. There are so many unknown things in a human life, which, if only told, might prove an apology, explain curious phenomena, and either enlist sympathy or deepen disgrace. Take the case of a man who leads a life of storm and controversy, who is one of the great combatants of the Senate or the Bar, and who is to be found wherever contention is bitterest and highest. But when once he has crossed the threshold of his home, all is peace; he is in the midst of the roses and evergreens of domestic life; love, sympathy, affiance, wrap him in profound repose, and brace him anew for the strain and conflict of life. But there is another man whose lot is apparently far less arduous, but in reality is far more so. He seems to pass days of ease at home, screened from the vulgar dust and noise of battle; but home may be no home for him. He may be surrounded with cares with which he may not be able to contend, and from which he cannot flee; he may be childless and wifeless, or wife and children may only present ideas of difficulty, antagonism, and alienation. That must be a skilled eyesight that will detect the private life behind the public life. I remember a man reading a

magnificent passage in a review. It was full of breadth and wisdom, of eloquence and power. And he found out that the writer become so famous was his next-door neighbour, a man whom he had always despised as one of the driest and fustiest of mortals. A man went to Edinburgh to consult a great physician, and all that the great physician could do was to tell him to call on a man whom he had known for years, and who lived on the opposite side of the way. Such people had only read

the lines, and had not sought to read between them. If we really read them, we might find out that our neighbours are much cleverer than we supposed them to be, and that we ourselves are not so clever as we thought. Ah, well, let us do our level best, my friends, so to write aspiration, effort, and endurance on the very foundations of our moral nature, that when we or others scrutinise the characters beneath the lines, we may decipher something of heavenly consolation and immortal hope!

---

'WHERE THE BROOK AND THE WILLOW KISS.'

---

A word, a look, two clasped hands,  
 Their plighted troths are taken;  
 Their hearts are light, their future bright:  
 Can aught this fond dream waken?

A word, a look, two clasped hands,  
 Their plighted troths are broken;  
 Their paths diverge—will they e'er merge?  
 A lone heart but the token.

J. G.

## THE SENIOR PARTNER.

By MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE GEITH,' ETC.

### CHAPTER XVI.

#### AFTER THE PARTY.

'It was the shawmpagne; it must hev been the shawmpagne.' Mr. McCullagh it chanced to be who made these remarks, but he did not utter them aloud. He was in the bosom of his family at breakfast on the morning after Mr. Pousnett's party, 'supping' with a poor appetite his porridge, but trying hard to look as if he liked 'them.'

There was not a fault to be found with the preparation. It had not the 'smell of burn' on it. It was of a correct thickness—not thin, but not lumpy. Never had Scotia's 'aitmeal' been better nor more cunningly manipulated, yet never had Mr. McCullagh felt less disposed to eat it.

Watchful eyes were upon him, however, and he felt constrained if possible to finish the platter. Terribly full seemed the soup-plate containing his mess, which, indeed, he inwardly likened to that of Benjamin, for it looked double his usual allowance; deep as a draw-well appeared the basin of milk with which the porridge was 'supped'; keen as avenging spirits were the memories of his previous night's escapade which recurred to memory; sharper than any prick of conscience the crazing maddening headache of which he 'didna care to speak,' and yet which he 'scarce knew how to thole.'

Poor Mr. McCullagh! If any unfortunate wretch ever had to pay for a whistle, that gentleman

had to pay for his then. He would have liked well enough to stay in bed and doze away his pain, or sit back in an armchair with a 'cool clout' laid across his throbbing forehead; but either course must have placed him at the mercy of Janet, and he thought in his extremity that, like David, he would rather receive his punishment from the Almighty than fall into the hands of man.

'It was the shawmpagne; it must hev been the shawmpagne,' he considered, slowly conveying another spoonful of smoking porridge into the basin of cold wholesome-looking milk. 'I warrant ye, honest wheesky never played a reasonable man such a trick. Why, I've drank—save and bless us, what *haven't* I drank in the way of good old Scotch, and slept as quiet as a child after it, and turned out next morning as cool and comfortable as man need wish! Lord, yon is a cunning liquor, taking away the head and leaving the legs! I wish I could just mind me of all I said and did no later nor last night.'

For in truth, the racking headache Mr. McCullagh experienced was but a faint and outward reflection of the agonies of dread gone through since waking that, in some vague way, he had compromised himself amongst all those great folk in Portman-square.

'Ye're no so keen on your vittuals this morning,' observed Miss Nicol, fastening her kinsman with a cold steely eye. 'Aren't they to your liking?'

Mr. McCullagh started guiltily.

'I was just about to remark, Janet,' he observed, with a ghastly smile, and cheeks coloured by an emotion Miss Nicol entirely failed to understand, but which at a hazard she attributed to the wiles of 'some young hussy,' 'that I never tasted porridge better made, nor stirred more evenly. There's not a lump of meal as big as a pin's head I have met with yet, and it's as fresh and clear of burn as any spring-posy. But the fact is, Janet,' he went on, diplomatically speaking the truth, and yet concealing the most important part of it, 'I did that last night which is, as you know, clean against my convictions and practice—I ate a first-rate dinner, and then I must needs put a big supper on the top of it; and now, but a few minutes after, so to speak, I am trying to cajole my appetite into thinking it can relish a good breakfast.'

Miss Nicol accepted this lengthy explanation with an implicit faith; for which, had Mr. McCullagh only imagined the extent of her belief, he must have felt immensely grateful. There was no reason, indeed, why she should doubt his statement, since no one knew better than herself the number of 'tumblers' and 'ekes' he could take with impunity.

She was not aware, either from experience or observation, of the fatal effects which ensue when a man, who has hitherto kept faithful to one stimulant diluted with water, takes to mixing his liquors, and swallowing different sorts of old wines in their native integrity.

'And that I should be such a born ediet,' considered Mr. McCullagh remorsefully, 'as to let myself be inveigled into drinking shawmpagne out of an ordinary

glass! It tasted no stronger nor water; but, my faith, I know now something about what its strength was. I believe the doctors say there is nothing will put life through a sick man as fast as shawmpagne. All I can say is, there is nothing will take the sense out of a man like it. Just to even to myself what I may have said or done after that big glass, or was it three big glasses! I mind me of Miss Pousnett's look, and I mind me about the people laughing; but I can't remember me of much more. I wonder how I conducted myself; and yet I can't, after all, have been so very far a-jee, for certainly Captain Crawford talked very sensibly as we came home together; and I know he would not let me settle with the cabman.'

'I suppose they were all very fine'—it was Miss Nicol who once again broke across the chain of his silent soliloquy—'ye might tell us a bit about their great goings-on. It's not to be supposed we shall ever see the like; but we'd fain be told how such grand people enjoy themselves.'

'Just like ourselves, Janet,' was the reply, 'only more, it seems to me—as is natural, seeing they have not a thing to vex themselves about from the 1st of January till the 31st of December.'

'But that's no answer,' returned Miss Nicol. 'How many had ye? Were they old or young, handsome or plain, well dressed or just simple, like me and Effie?'

Which last was a home-thrust which might have touched Mr. McCullagh once, but in these latter days passed him by scatheless.

'How many?' he repeated; 'Faith, I can't tell ye that, Janet; only it was a great gathering, and for the most part they were young; and whether they were handsome



or not, they looked handsome. As for dress—and here Mr. McCullagh stretched out one lean yellow hand with a gesture deprecatory of his powers of describing, even faintly, what miracles in the way of costume he had seen—‘it was just unimaginable. One grander nor another, one quieter nor another. Mrs. Pousnett was trailing about in velvet, and her niece in a wisp of white muslin that looked as if it had never seen starch in its life. Miss Pousnett had on a pink silk, Effie; and her sister was dressed in blue areo-phane, I think Miss Crawford called the gown. Talk of money, why, it must have been trundling about; while the young women I saw last night were putting on them.’

‘And who was the best-looking of all ye saw?’ asked Miss Nicol, with some diplomacy.

‘I’m sure I can’t say, it would be like picking one flower out of a posy. They all looked pretty, and they were all pleasant; but just to make a choice, I could not see one to compare with a lady dressed all in black, with a white camilla in her bodice, and pearls twisted through her hair. She was like a queen, only far nicer spoke. She’s a great heiress, I’m told—has something to the tune of two or three hundred thousand pounds put by to commence fighting the baker and butcher with; and young Pousnett and she are going to make a match of it,’ Mr. McCullagh added, with a little pardonable touch of pride in his withered and wizened old voice.

‘I wonder ye’re satisfied to come back here and put up with Effie and me,’ remarked Miss Nicol, in her most jocular manner.

‘Hoots, Janet!’ retorted Mr. McCullagh; ‘why wouldn’t I be glad to come back out of that

Babel to my ain fireside! After all there’s nae place like hame; and that minds me they had the march round last night, and everybody sang, “Auld Lang Syne.”’

‘Ye don’t mean it!’ said Miss Nicol.

‘Deed do I,’ returned Mr. McCullagh. ‘We all of us marched round the room, some smiling, some courting, some like myself maybe, thinking of days that could come ower again nae mair; and the band played “Auld Lang Syne;” and then somebody—I think it must have been Miss Crawford—lilted softly,

“Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to min’?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And Auld Lang Syne?”

If ye believe me, just in a minute everybody was singing, as with one voice,

“For Auld Lang Syne, my dear,  
For Auld Lang Syne;  
We’ll drink a cup of kindness yet  
For Auld Lang Syne.”

That’s right, Janet, that’s bravely done! I see you can turn a tune yet with the youngest of them.’

A compliment of so dubious a nature that Miss Nicol’s reception of it in total silence cannot be considered extraordinary.

‘It’s thinking about all those nice young ladies hinders ye eating your breakfast,’ she suggested.

‘Well, maybe that has some share in the matter,’ answered Mr. McCullagh, with an attempt at liveliness creditable in the extreme when the extent of his physical suffering is remembered; ‘but I think that supper has most to answer for.’

‘What had ye?’ asked Miss Nicol.

‘What hadn’t we would be easier to say,’ he answered. ‘I never saw such a table spread before, never. There was just everything you could imagine,

and many things ye never saw. Turkeys and fowls and disguised meats and cookies of all sorts; and jellies and creams and ices; and shawmpagne-cup and claret-cup, and every wine almost you could name; and the pictures all decked with holly and wreaths of evergreen; and involuntarily Mr. McCullagh's eyes sought the barren formality of his own four walls, where, above a couple of inexpensive prints, Effie had stuck a few sprigs of holly, the leaves of which were already shrivelled and making a litter, as Miss Nicol, in the plenitude of her housewifely zeal, declared no further gone than that very morning.

'I suppose it was very pretty, uncle?' hazarded the younger woman, speaking for the first time.

'Pretty,' he repeated, with emphasis; 'it was just beautiful. Out of fairyland nothing, I suppose, was ever seen like it. I would have been well pleased for ye to have had a look at it. Something that for ye to remember all your days, and talk about to your grandchildren when you get to be an old woman.'

There was a dead silence, so dead that Mr. McCullagh looked around him in amazement. He knew a good deal about women, but he did not yet understand that the average woman cares for nothing except for what she herself takes part in. The glories of the Pousnett household were not as a mere show to Miss Nicol and her niece; they were gall and wormwood—something to hate with a deadly detestation, to keep for seven years in their pockets, like the Cornishman's stone, and turn each day, and many times a day, during that period.

'Ye'll take a cup of tea?' hazarded Miss Nicol, after that awkward pause, signing to Effie that she should remove the milk

and porridge the master chose to leave unconsumed.

'No,' he answered. 'I'm no for any tea. I had enough to eat and to drink last night to last me for four-and-twenty hours;' and having thus done two good things,—namely, provided against the not improbable chance that he might be as little 'on' for his dinner as he had felt for his breakfast, and also managed to get out the word which had been sticking in his throat and his conscience,—Mr. McCullagh thankfully left his porridge and his tea and his bacon, and proceeded down-stairs, where the first person he saw standing on the mat and looking uncertainly about him was Captain Crawford.

'O,' instantly flashed through poor Mr. McCullagh's mind, 'I know I did something out of the way last night! I must have said a word to offend that young sister of his, and he's come to have it out wi' me.'

But Captain Crawford did not look like a man who had come either to seek for an explanation or demand an apology. He smiled pleasantly as he looked at Mr. McCullagh tripping nimbly down the broad easy steps, and holding out his hand, said,

'I am fortunate to find you at home. I came round very early, hoping to catch you before you went out. I want to take your advice.'

'Then, for the Lord's sake, take it some other time,' entreated Mr. McCullagh; 'for I'm clean out of my mind with such a headache as I never had since I was a wee lad and fell from the top of a twenty-foot ladder on to the causeway with a crash they said broke one of the paving-stones.'

'Why, what is the reason of that?' asked Captain Crawford. 'Surely not the—'

'Ay, just the—' said Mr. McCullagh, catching the speaker up before he could end his sentence, and framing his own in like mysterious fashion, while hurrying the visitor into his private room, that no word of such a dialogue might be heard up-stairs or caught by the ear of passing clerk or errand-boy. 'I can stand,' he went on, having carefully closed the heavy door against the outer world—'I can stand as much honest liquor as anybody, maybe more; but your flashing fizzing stuff has done for me entirely. I b'lieve Satan himself is bottled up in it, and just runs riot in a man when the cork bangs out of it for pure delight at being let loose.'

'And yet Mr. Pousnett's champagne is considered remarkably fine,' observed Captain Crawford, smiling.

'Fine! I think it is fine! Cream was never softer, water never tasted milder; but, however, it is of no use talking, my head is fairly splitting. I don't believe, if I had come down heels last out of a five-story window, it could feel much worse.'

'What have you taken for it?' asked his visitor sympathetically.

'Take! What could I take?'

'Soda-water, for instance, with a dash of brandy in it.'

'And where would I get soda-water?'

'If you have none in the house' ('In the house!' repeated Mr. McCullagh, *sotto voce*.) 'you could get a bottle at any tavern in the neighbourhood.'

'Why, I might just as well file a declaration of bankruptcy at once!' exclaimed the sufferer. 'If I was to go into any tavern in the City of London on such an errand, I'd have the very street Arabs gibing at me.'

Captain Crawford burst out laughing; he could not help it.

The seriousness of Mr. McCullagh's manner, the strength of his convictions, the disgusted sickly aspect of his remarkable face, were beyond the gravity of flesh and blood. Recovering himself instantly almost, however, the younger man said,

'As I am not known in the City, and my character is not likely to suffer, I will go and get you some soda-water myself;' and he turned to the door, when Mr. McCullagh cried feebly,

'Bide a wee, bide a wee! I'll maybe be better after a bit.'

'No, you won't,' returned Captain Crawford, with the decision of one who knew far more of such matters than his friend. 'I will be back directly, and I won't compromise you, be sure of that.' With which speech he departed, and Mr. McCullagh laid his aching head on the table, and wondered vaguely whether the thing was in creation which could do him any good.

He had a certain faith in Captain Crawford and a little in the specific proposed; but it seemed to him at that moment as if neither man nor nature could produce aught likely to exorcise the effects produced by that diabolical 'shawmpagne.'

'It does not look much like to cure a man in such a state as I find myself,' said Mr. McCullagh plaintively, taking up the bottle Captain Crawford produced, and with one eye closed surveying the contents as he held it up between him and the light.

'Try it,' advised the Captain laconically; and having found a tumbler, in which, out of his flask, he poured a small modicum of brandy, he was about to unwind the cork, when Mr. McCullagh once again interposed.

'For any sake, man, let's make the doorsure first. I wouldn't—'

no, that I wouldn't—for ten pounds, nor twenty, let any one in the house see me taking such a thing.'

Many a time in after-days Captain Crawford laughed as he recalled that morning, the poor little Scotchman, his face ghastly, his eyes bleared, standing in an agony of apprehension on one side of the table, while Captain Crawford, having duly 'shot the lock,' unfastened the wire.

Bang went the cork with the noise of a field-battery, and, guided by the Captain's skilful hand, out dashed the precious liquid frantically into the tumbler.

'We're done for now—we're done!' cried Mr. McCullagh in an agony, evidently expecting every soul on the premises would rush into the hall demanding what was the matter.

'Drink it—drink it off,' urged Captain Crawford, presenting the tumbler.

'It looks awful like the stuff last night,' hesitated Mr. McCullagh.

'It isn't like it, though. Come, Mr. McCullagh, one pull, and you'll be better. There, that's right;' and he took back the empty glass, and, convulsed with merriment, placed it on the chimney-piece.

'And the Lord alone knows what I'm to do with the bottle,' said Mr. McCullagh solemnly, 'setting' that awful piece of circumstantial evidence with a serious eye.

'Smash it into pieces and put them under the grate,' suggested the Captain, with martial readiness.

'Ye little know—ye little know,' observed Mr. McCullagh, mournfully in earnest; 'about a house it's just inconceivable the few things a man can do his womenkind won't ferret till they find every in and out.'

'Well, say I had a bottle of

soda-water,' suggested Captain Crawford.

'I should not like to tell a lie about the matter,' answered Mr. McCullagh; 'that is, a straightforward lie, ye understand, though I did let them think this morning it was the late supper last night set me against my porridge. No; I'll just have to put it away for the present in some safe lock-fast place of my own. I'm sure I never thought to have to do such a thing.'

It was irresistible. Captain Crawford laughed till the room rang again; till Robert, who had that instant entered the hall, paused in amazement, wondering who, in all the wide earth, it was who found it possible to extract such merriment out of anything in that house.

'It's easy for you to laugh,' said Mr. McCullagh, offended: 'if ye were in a strait like mine ye'd maybe be singing to a different tune. I'd be sorry for ye, if ye were in trouble. I'm very sure of that.'

'And I am sure I feel very sorry for you,' answered the Captain, vainly trying to compose his features into even an appearance of gravity; 'and to show how sorry I am, I will dispose of the bottle. I'll take it back to the place whence I got it, and boldly demand the twopence I had, what the landlady called, to leave upon it;' and suiting the action to the word, Mr. McCullagh's best friend, as he felt him at the moment to be, put the cause of so much dread in his greatcoat pocket and rose to depart.

'I won't trouble you about my little difficulty now,' he said; 'but if to-morrow you could spare me half an hour here, or, better still, come and dine with me at any house in the City you can recommend, I should really feel grateful.'

For a moment it crossed Mr.

McCullagh's mind that he would ask his friend in need to come and take 'pot-luck' at home with him instead; but instantly he dismissed the idea, for things in Basinghall-street were greatly changed since he gave his cordial invitation to come and taste that rare elixir he procured, nobody in London knew from whom, over the Border.

'There is more nor one good house in the City,' he remarked at last, showing which way his mind inclined.

'Well, name any place you like, and come and have dinner there to-morrow at six o'clock.'

'Let me pay the score,' entreated Mr. McCullagh, after he had mentioned a 'quiet hawtel,' presided over, it is perhaps unnecessary to say, by a canny countryman. 'I'd consider it an honour—I would, indeed—if ye would be my guest.'

'If I come home from the East with my full complement of limbs,' answered Captain Crawford cheerily, 'or, indeed, if I come back at all, you shall play the host. Now I must have my own way.'

'Are you going there in very truth?' asked Mr. McCullagh.

'Yes, almost immediately; we have got our orders.'

'I'm real sorry,' said Mr. McCullagh, and he was so. After all, it is only when we see before us some man on whose face we may never look again, the full horror of war comes home to the minds of many.

'And I am very glad,' replied Captain Crawford quickly; and next minute Mr. McCullagh was watching his retreating figure, as he paced with long soldierly strides across the court.

'He's a right good-hearted lad, yon,' soliloquised Mr. McCullagh; 'and I do believe my head is a thought better already.'

## CHAPTER XVII.

### NEW-YEAR'S-DAY.

IGNORANT of Mr. Pousnett's decision, unaware that entrance into the charmed precincts of Portman-square was for him never again, Robert McCullagh junior, still with the gloss of the new partnership on his manner, took his way upon the first day of the New Year to North-street, in order to learn what had occurred when, according to arrangement, his cousin called at Pousnett's office.

Ever since the fruition of his hopes, Robert the younger had been absent from London. The astute head of the firm with which he was now connected considered it might be, upon the whole, better if the news of his son's good fortune were conveyed to the Scotch merchant by letter. The questioning and cross-questioning to which, in the first moment of receiving such astounding intelligence, he might subject his first-born, seemed to Mr. Pousnett's wisdom better avoided.

'The less your father knows about your concerns now, the more satisfactory you will find it for all parties,' said the greatest man Robert had ever known; and possibly it was for this reason the new partner was despatched somewhat summarily to Holland, where, on one pretext or another, he was detained amongst dead-and-alive cities until Christmas had come and gone.

Then he was told to return, taking Paris in his way; and, arriving in London on the very night of Mr. Pousnett's party, started the next day to see his cousin, from whom he had heard nothing in the mean time.

Basinghall-street lay directly on his route, so he called there *en passant* to wish his father many

happy New Years; the old Scotchman set what he called 'great store' by visits and 'first foots,' and many other signs and tokens, on the first day of each January. When he entered the hall he was, as has been previously mentioned, astonished to hear shouts of laughter issuing from Mr. McCullagh's private sanctum.

'Who on earth is it, Alick?' he asked one of the clerks, who came out of the opposite office at the moment.

'I am sure I canna jest tell ye, Master Robert,' was the reply. 'I never set eyes on him before. He went out awhile ago, and then came back again—a tall strapping man, black-a-vised, and with a great beard.'

'He seems to be enjoying himself,' remarked Robert, a little discontentedly.

'Ay, he has been going on like that, off and on, this bit and more. He's maybe not quite right in his head,' with which reasonable suggestion Alick departed on the errand he had to do, and Robert ascended the stairs leading to the upper part of the house, muttering as he went, 'He must be some fool.'

The breakfast-things were still upon the table when he entered the apartment sacred to the delights of domestic intercourse, for Miss Nicol and Effie had lingered a little over their weak tea, uttering fragmentary remarks in dispraise of the Pousnett connection, and hazarding various disparaging observations concerning the ladies of that family and the ill ways of Englishwomen as a mass.

Miss Nicol had of course the bulk of the conversation, if conversation it could be called, to herself; for Effie only uttered such monosyllables and interjectionary comments as were absolutely ne-

cessary; but that she felt interested in the subject was beyond question, a certain eager look in her usually dull eyes, and an unaccustomed tone in her mournful voice, must have told any one acquainted with her that if Mr. McCullagh so far 'forgot himself' as to let himself be 'snared' by one of those 'designing madams,' she, at all events, would not prove inconsolable.

'You may take my word for it,' said Miss Nicol, in continuation of her subject, 'Mr. Pousnett will never rest till he has gotten your uncle for one of his daughters.'

'An old man like him!' observed Effie.

'He's no so old,' retorted Miss Nicol. 'He's not much above fifty, and he is active as a boy. And he has thousands upon thousands,' continued the elder lady, finding Effie made no comment upon the subject of Mr. McCullagh's activity, which Miss Nicol might, indeed, have extolled had she only seen him on the previous evening; 'and money is all that sort think about. If one of them gets hold of him the thousands will soon melt down to tens, or less nor that.'

'He has more sense, I am very sure,' said Effie.

'Has he?' snapped Miss Nicol. 'All men are just naturals when a pretty woman, or one they think pretty, is in question. Besides, he made a bad match once, and what would hinder him making another. Of all the useless creatures I ever did come across, his wife was just the top. She could not wash out a handkerchief, barely knew how to sew a button on a shirt. She was all for show and company and gossip and the best of good living, and would sit for the hour making fun of the Scotch, and mimicking her husband to his face.'



'That was Robert's mother,' suggested Effie.

'Of course it was,' answered Miss Nicol sharply. 'What other wife but her had your uncle ever, and Robert is as like her in his ways as two peas in a pod! I wonder who that is down-stairs! I never heard such guffawing before. It is some of the new fashions, I suppose. Well, all I hope is we sha'n't, any of us, have cause to rue the day when we first heard the name of Pousnett. Good gracious, Robert, ye might as well kill us outright as frighten us to death,' she added hurriedly; for Robert had come in through the door, which was a little ajar, and crossed the room softly, and laid both hands on her shoulders before she was aware of his presence, and said cheerily,

'A happy New Year, and many of them, to both of you!'

'And the same to you,' answered Miss Nicol, insensibly softened for the moment by the sight of his smiling handsome face, and the cordial tone of his voice. 'Why, what a time it is since you honoured us with a visit!'

'I have been away,' he answered. 'I only came back yesterday.'

'And how did you enjoy yourself last night?' asked Miss Nicol, looking with what she considered an arch expression towards Effie, and evidently wishing her to share the humour of the question. Effie, however, was not to be seduced into any indecorous manifestation of hilarity. She kept her eyes modestly fastened on a crumb, the most perfect incarnation of 'still life' Robert thought he had ever beheld.

'I was rather tired,' he replied, wondering a little at Miss Nicol's inquiry; 'but I enjoyed myself well enough.'

'Ye didn't see your father?'

'No; I have just come round to see him now.'

'But that's not what I mean. Ye didn't catch a glimpse of him last night?'

'How should I? where was he?'

'He said he didn't see you,' answered Miss Nicol, with an exquisite relish of her own wit; 'but there was such a throng he might have missed you.'

'I do not know what you are talking about,' said Robert, mystified.

'Why, about your party?' explained Miss Nicol, with another look towards Effie.

'There were not many at it; and you know my father never goes to Mr. Mostin's.'

'Deed, and it is not Mr. Mostin I am talking of. Somebody very different indeed,' and Miss Nicol actually giggled; 'isn't he, Effie?'

'Ay,' agreed that young maiden mournfully, and she turned the crumb with the tip of her forefinger.

'Where was my father last night?' asked Robert, in desperation.

'Why, at Mr. Pousnett's, no less!' exclaimed Miss Nicol, who thought she had led up to this point with exceeding generalship.

'At Mr. Pousnett's!' repeated Robert. 'Are you sure?'

'We are sure enough, aren't we, Effie? And he never came back till the small hours; and they had dancing and singing and I don't know what all, and he could hardly swallow a bite of breakfast; and he's just full of those people and their goings-on. And so you were not asked, Robert?'

'I was not in London to be asked,' returned the young man, nettled.

'No more ye were; but I suppose Mr. Pousnett knew when ye

might likely be expected back. However, it just confirms me in my thought.'

Robert did not dare ask her what her thought had been. He was so accustomed to oracular utterances covering disagreeable suggestions that he lacked courage to beg Miss Nicol to explain the remark.

But Miss Nicol was not to be balked. Though he would not question her, she would answer him.

'I'll just tell ye my candid mind, Robert. I feel certain sure Mr. Pousnett will never rest till he has got your father for a son-in-law.'

Hearing which astounding proposition the young man burst into a peal of laughter. It was too much for him; the idea of his father standing in that relationship to Mr. Pousnett was more than he could bear with gravity.

He had not a keen sense of humour; indeed, it may be safely said he was almost destitute of that faculty, but there was something in the picture Miss Nicol conjured up which caused him to laugh as he had probably never done before in that house.

'Everybody seems to be very merry this morning, Effie,' remarked Miss Nicol, vexed that Robert could laugh on such a subject.

If she intended to include Effie amongst the number, her opinions about merriment must have been singular indeed, for a more woe-begone-looking creature it would have been hard at that moment to find.

Perhaps this notion struck Robert also, for he went off at score again.

'As you are in such a daffing humour,' observed Miss Nicol, 'it is a pity you had not stopped a bit on your way up. Such screech-

ing and laughing I never heard before as has been going on downstairs. Maybe you can tell us who it is that has been shouting and guffawing like a madman.'

'I think he brought a popgun in with him,' said Effie, plaintively joining in the conversation.

'That reminds me I have brought you a little present,' began Robert, for the first time directly addressing his younger relation. 'It is not much worth, but I thought you would like to have something from Paris. It is a bracelet,' he went on; 'and I did not know what would be most useful to you,' he added, turning to Miss Nicol, 'so I bought a brooch. I hope you will like it,' and he placed two small cases on the table.

'Ye'll not keep much out of your partnership if ye begin making such presents,' said Miss Nicol sententially.

It was not, perhaps, the most graceful way of receiving a gift imaginable; but Robert well knew the genial manners which prevailed in his father's house, and understood Miss Nicol was gratified.

As for Effie, a faint red spot was visible on the top of each pallid cheek, and she managed to get out, 'I'm sure it was very good of ye to think of me,' while something that bore the similitude of a smile hovered around her thin close-shut lips.

'Put it on and let's see how it looks,' cried Miss Nicol, at the same time fastening her brooch in its place, and glancing down at its beauties with a pride she could not conceal. 'Ye'll be grand now, Effie, when ye go next to tea at Mrs. Anderson's. Gracious, Robert,' she added, when Effie, having clasped the bracelet round her wrist, where it appeared to about as much advantage as it

might if hung on the arm of a skeleton, 'that bit of a thing must have cost a mint of money!'

'Never mind what it cost, so long as Effie likes it,' answered Robert gallantly, though indeed qualms as to the prudence of a man in his position buying anything had crossed his mind when in the agonies of being tossed up and down in the Channel.

'And what'll ye have brought for your father?' asked Miss Nicol curiously. 'I'll warrant he's no been left out in the cold.'

'What, are ye talking about me?' inquired Mr. McCullagh himself at this juncture. 'Well, Robert,' he went on, without waiting for any reply, 'so ye're back safe and sound. And how's a' wi' you?'

Considering that Robert's hat covered his family, this question might be regarded as somewhat superfluous; but Mr. McCullagh had a stock of such phrases, and was in the habit of airing them on occasions of high festivity or when he was in the best of temper. Knowing this, his son answered demurely that all with him was pretty well, that he had been abroad until the previous day, and that he had just 'dropped in'—an expression which found great favour in Mr. McCullagh's eye, and which he always pronounced 'dhrophed'—to wish his father many a prosperous and pleasant 1st of January.

'Thank ye, Robert; the same to you wi' all my heart. "Gie's yer hand, my trusty fren,"' quoted Mr. McCullagh, speaking as enthusiastically as the state of his body would permit; and Robert having complied with his request the pair shook hands with a gravity and solemnity which invested the proceeding with something of the nature of a religious ceremony.

'I'm glad ye've come back in such good spirits,' went on Mr. McCullagh, who was not himself that morning much inclined to look at existence through rose-coloured spectacles. 'Ye seemed to have found a jest that amused ye mightily as I came up the stair.'

Robert smiled. 'I was only laughing at something Miss Nicol said,' he explained. Hearing which Miss Nicol put her finger to her lip; a gesture Robert failed to notice, but which did not escape his father's quick eye.

'It's no often Janet gives us anything diverting,' observed Mr. McCullagh, relishing her confusion with an exceeding delight. 'Let's hear what it was, Robert. I'm just in want of a heartsome word to cheer me up a bit.'

'Then I'm certain, sir, her notion ought to do you good,' answered Robert, perfectly unconscious of how beautifully he was going to 'put his foot in it.' 'She believes Mr. Pousnett will know rest neither by day nor night till he has got you for a son-in-law.'

'The next thing I let on to you, Robert—' Miss Nicol was indignantly beginning, when Mr. McCullagh blandly interposed with,

'Hoots, Janet! If ye like to talk babbles, ye can't complain if people repeat babbles; not,' he proceeded, 'that I can say ye're altogether wrong in your opinion. There's many a one would think twice before refusing me, or rather my money. However, if it's any ease to both your minds I may just tell ye I don't mean to ask Miss Pousnett or any other woman-body to come to Basing-hall-street as my wife. Your mother and me, Robert, weren't as happy, maybe, as we might have been; still I'm no going to

put such an affront on her memory as to marry again.'

'Indeed, if it would make you happier—' cried Robert eagerly. But his father cut short whatever else he intended to say by remarking,

'But it wouldn't, it couldn't. All I want in this world now is to see my sons doing well and marrying quiet sensible wives, that'll not lead them into debt and dance a jig with them to the Bankruptcy Court. For myself, if I can live honest and die respected, that's enough for me. And if ye could, any of ye, just tell me something that would rid me of as much of this awful headache as the soda-water didn't take away, I'd bless you,' he added mentally; but he lacked courage to speak the words aloud, though indeed Robert would cheerfully have ordered in six dozen of soda-water for him if he had only known his father desired such an extremely unlikely article.

'It was all a joke of mine,' said Miss Nicol, taking advantage of the pause which ensued to set herself right with the master of the house. 'I never thought Robert would deem I meant such a remark to be taken seriously.'

'A joke, was it?' commented Mr. McCullagh dryly. 'Well, Robert might be excused his mistake; ye're little in the habit of cracking jokes, Janet. About once in seven years serves your turn, I'm thinking.'

With which crushing statement Mr. McCullagh, deciding the conversation with the grace and beauty of his establishment might conveniently end, asked Robert if he wouldn't like to step downstairs and 'take a look about him.'

Upon the face of this earth there was nothing Robert was less likely to desire than to take a look about him in his father's

counting-house. Still he acceded to the proposal with great apparent willingness, and was duly escorted in a sort of triumphal march over the premises.

He had written to and received a congratulatory letter from his father on the subject of the new partnership; while his brothers, breaking the chain of silence which generally distinguished their intercourse with Robert, were good enough to express their pleasure at his good fortune. But this was the first time he had appeared in the flesh in the Scotch warehouse since getting his promotion, and Mr. McCullagh, though, to quote his own expression, 'his head was splitting,' determined not to let him escape till every man and errand-boy in receipt of 'weekly wage' beheld the man who was now, in a 'manner of speaking,' as good as Pousnett himself.

That a grand feather had been stuck in the McCullagh cap, no one who watched the Scotch merchant while he spoke casually about 'my son Robert' and the good thing he had stepped into, could doubt.

Never in all his recollection had the new partner seen his father so agreeable and conciliating. He hinted that if his first-born had a fancy for a relish of marmalade with his breakfast, or entertained a wild desire to conciliate some friend with a present of 'Finnan haddies,' a pound or two of hard biscuits, and even a bottle of whisky, any one, or all, of these delicacies might be his for the asking. He sampled him some 'sweeties,' and generously bade him pocket the scoopful, which Robert did with as good a grace as he could command. He asked almost pathetically if there was anything the young man could fancy, and bade

him not be shy about naming the fact if anything 'struck his eye.'

He took great care to tell every one Mr. Robert had just come back from Holland, and asked him so many questions appertaining to the Scotch trade, or rather to the absence of almost all Scotch trade amongst the Dutch, that, for a time, his son really supposed he had an idea of establishing a branch business—say at Amsterdam.

He was nice, too, in more than one respect; for he never put a query concerning the nature of the business which had taken Robert across the seas, and he refrained also from all mention of the previous evening's festivities.

'I won't be the one to damp him,' he thought. 'No doubt he will get on all the better if he has nothing to do with those wonderful agreeable young women; but it's not like he'd think wi' me, and so I'll jest keep a quiet tongue in my head.' Which he did accordingly, and Robert following suit, the great party in Portman-square was not so much as touched upon between them.

'I hope Pousnett won't tell him the way I led the dance,' considered the merchant guiltily; for cool reflection had brought with it the idea that 'louping,' and 'heching,' and cutting the figure eight, with his arms spread out like the sails of a windmill, were, perhaps, modes of dancing which had been more in place in a barn at Greenock than in a grand London house, with grand people for guests. 'But I don't think he will. Pousnett's no fool; and I'm mistaken if he has not taken Robert's measure to an accuracy.'

After a time—after a long time as it seemed to Robert—they left the counting-house and repaired

to Mr. McCullagh's special office, where before the fire was placed a most luxurious easy-chair, the son's New Year's gift to his father, which he had desired should be taken direct into that room the moment it arrived.

'Bless and save us!' cried Mr. McCullagh, rubbing his eyes in astonishment, and perhaps, for the moment, imagining the 'shawmpagne' was at some new trick and causing him to see double. 'What's that?'

'A comfortable chair for you, father, which I knew you would not get for yourself,' answered the young man. 'It was the only thing I could think of, you would be likely to use.'

Mr. McCullagh did not immediately reply. He went and looked the new purchase over carefully: he pressed down its springs, he felt its stuffing, he patted it gently twice or thrice; he sat down in it, and leaned his head, his still aching head, back with a sense of delightful comfort; then his poor little eyes filled with tears, and rising, he 'gripped' Robert's hand once more, with a feeling stirring at his heart more like love than he had ever felt for him.

'Ye'll mak' a lazy man of me, I doubt,' he said, in a light and sportive manner; but Robert saw the tears, and felt if he had paid ten times the amount for the chair he would have been amply rewarded.

'I must go back to the office now,' he remarked. 'Mr. Pousnett is sure to want to see me.'

'Go then, my lad,' answered Mr. McCullagh; 'and guid go wi' ye!'

As he went away from the door Robert looked at his watch, and found it was necessary he should defer calling in North-street until the next day.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## IN NORTH-STREET.

THE 2d of January found Mr. McCullagh's headache vanished, and Robert so hard at work in his new capacity as partner, that it did not seem to him he should ever be able again to steal enough time during business hours to call upon his cousin.

The life in those early days he regarded as delightful. With what a feeling of importance he took possession of his new room, where he had often stood an inferior before one of his masters! How carefully he scrutinised the furniture and locked the drawers! How charming it was to stand upon his own hearth—nay, before his own fire—and chat with this great shipper or that well-known financier no longer as a mere manager, but as the equal of any man who might come there.

Yes, it was worth the price he had paid for it, or rather it was worth the price he should have to pay for it. Robert decided this deliberately, though he had come to the conclusion, while wandering in foreign lands, that the price would prove heavy. People who had merely nodded before touched their hats to him now; those who in passing had only said 'Good-day!' crossed the street to shake hands with him. It was quite wonderful to consider the number of persons who were 'so glad' and 'so delighted' and 'so gratified' (though not surprised) to hear he had been taken into partnership. The arid City suddenly blossomed like the rose; the pavements he had often found somewhat dull and dirty put on a gala-dress to welcome this fortunate individual's return. Life in a moment seemed all made up of sunshine. It was not a particularly nice day—indeed, it was

a most abominably disagreeable one; but it seemed to the new partner that the weather was better than he had ever known it. In a moment existence had become a fairy-tale, and he was walking through a land of enchantment enchanted.

'Have you heard from your cousin since you went away?' asked Mr. Pousnett casually of the new partner.

No; his new partner had heard nothing about Alfred Mostin.

'He refused the post I offered him here,' said Mr. Pousnett, forgetful, perhaps, that Mr. Robert McCullagh might as well have been consulted about that offer.

'I do not think you would have found the arrangement satisfactory if he had accepted it,' hazarded Robert.

'I differ from you there,' answered Mr. Pousnett. 'I took to your cousin immensely. A man of parts—wonderfully clever, extremely original. He ought to have been your father's son instead of you.' And, having paid Robert this doubtful compliment, Mr. Pousnett smiled graciously.

The new partner coloured. He scarcely knew whether to understand his senior's remark as intended for a sneer at his father or a joke at himself, and, under the circumstances, wisely made only a general proposition, which committed him to nothing—namely, that Alf Mostin was certainly original in his fancy for 'going about the City in a worse coat than man ever elected to wear before.'

'Never mind about the coat,' said Mr. Pousnett, whose own fit him like his skin; 'it is what lies underneath I look at—the man who wears the coat; and I confess I feel sorry your cousin and I could not come to terms.'



'I know Alf better than you, sir,' ventured Robert, who in Mr. Pousnett's presence still felt himself a very small person indeed; 'and I am quite sure you could not have got on together. He is a man who never did and who never will do any good for himself or any other person.'

'That is exactly what Mr. Snow told me,' remarked Mr. Pousnett; 'yet still, as I am very obstinate, I hold to my own opinion. At all events, I should like to have tried to do him some good, but he would not let me.'

'Would not let you!' repeated Robert, mystified.

'No, he would not have anything to do with me at any price,' explained Mr. Pousnett suavely. 'Said he preferred his "diggings"—I use his own expression—in North-street to the best lodgings in London, and his own employment, whatever that may be, to the highest post I could offer him.'

'Alf said that in so many words!' exclaimed the younger McCullagh.

'Alf said that in his own terse and expressive phraseology,' repeated Mr. Pousnett. 'Commenting to you upon his utterances, I can only say I am very sorry, for I liked the young man, and I think he might have grown to like me.'

'He could not help doing that, sir,' said Robert warmly; a pleasant flattery Mr. Pousnett acknowledged with a courteous inclination of his head.

'And now, McCullagh,' the senior partner began, 'there is a little word on business I want to say to you. Don't look alarmed; it is not an unpleasant word,' he went on; for Robert, perhaps from the adverse circumstances which attended his childhood, and the shifty sort of existence he was associated with when a

boy, had a trick of starting and turning red when surprised by any unexpected utterance, as if he imagined something disagreeable must be impending. 'I have been thinking most seriously about that Snow business, and what it is best to do concerning it. I may tell you candidly that, if I had not given you my word to take you into partnership for a certain sum of money, nothing on earth should have induced me to accept a partner hampered as you are; but there is no use in dwelling upon that now. What we must do is, try to get you out of such hands as soon as possible. No doubt you have been worrying yourself as to how the mere interest is to be paid; and what I want to say is this: Come to me a day or two before you require any given amount, and out of my private account I will advance the sum necessary, which you can afterwards repay to me. In a business such as this it would be destruction if once it were known any partner was in straitened circumstances; and therefore, while depending upon you to exercise all possible economy, I do not want you ever to feel short of a five-pound note. You and I can arrange all that. Do not draw upon your share in the firm except in a lump sum twice a year. Come to me. Just think over the position, and say what you can live upon, burdened as you are; and every week I will give you enough to go on with, and at the end of each six months we will try to satisfy Mr. Snow.'

'If my heart's blood, Mr. Pousnett—' began Robert.

'No, my dear friend,' interrupted Mr. Pousnett easily, 'your heart's blood could not be of the slightest service to me; quite the contrary. We are rowing in the same boat now; and all I ask of

you is, to keep as well in health as you can, and advance our mutual interests as much as possible. When shall you see your cousin?

'I thought of going round to his place this afternoon, but there are so many things to do.'

'Leave them undone, then,' interrupted Mr. Pousnett, who knew very well speed was not his partner's strong point. 'There is nothing that won't keep till to-morrow. Go to Mr. Mostin, and say I have not yet filled up the post I offered him. He can still have it if he choose to come.'

'I will certainly give him your message, sir,' answered Robert. 'Still, I cannot help repeating my former opinion—'

There came a change over Mr. Pousnett's face, which stopped the further words Robert would have spoken even upon his lips. Contempt, astonishment, anger, strove together for an instant; then in a perfectly smooth voice the senior partner said,

'We need not go over all that ground again. I have not forgotten your expressed opinion, but I do not attach the slightest value to it. I want Mr. Mostin, and I know why I want him. I understand you perfectly, but you do not understand me.'

A statement so undeniably true and so crushing, not merely as to its matter, but also in its manner, that Robert shrank timidly back into his shell, feeling that, as manager, he had never got such a snub. In a vague intangible sort of way he began to comprehend although he might to the outside world be Mr. Pousnett's partner, to that gentleman himself he could never seem other than a servant, and a not very indispensable servant either.

'My father was right,' he thought bitterly. 'They did not want me here,' and then he ob-

served aloud, abjectly enough, that he would go at once to his cousin's and tell him what Mr. Pousnett said.

The short winter's day was hastening to its close as Robert walked through the filthy streets, which a fall of snow overnight rendered hateful to traverse. The side-paths were unsafe, sloppy, greasy—fenced in by a bulwark of mud and snow swept off the pavement, with which in those days, as in these, the authorities were simply incompetent to deal. The horse-roads were a mass of black sludge and mire. In the morning they had been bad enough; but the traffic of the intervening hours, the wheels of thousands of vehicles, the hoofs of horses, the feet of pedestrians, had worked the City thoroughfares into a state of dirt and discomfort unimaginable save to those who had to pursue their way through them.

Gas was blazing in banks and offices as Robert, in the gloomiest of tempers, in the most depressed of spirits, pursued his wretched walk. The evening was dark and lowering, giving a promise of more snow, which promise it righteously fulfilled. Aloft in upper stories dim lights burned fitfully. The City, never cheerful in winter at that especial hour, looked its gloomiest. In dreary graveyards the untrodden snow lay thick over the forgotten dead; up lonely courts solitary lamps blinked sadly; churches, pent between buildings trying to elbow them off the face of the earth, looked more forlorn and melancholy, Robert thought, than he had ever fancied them before. A murky sky brooded overhead—a sky which seemed to hold no promise of moon or stars again in the lifetime of man. In the less frequented lanes and alleys which he trod, the sullen roar of the

City's traffic sounded mournful and solemn as the wash of the waves upon some flat and dreary coast.

In all his previous experiences of London the new partner had not felt the time and circumstances so utterly depressing. There was a penetrating chilliness in the air which bade defiance to the thickest top-coat, buttoned close though it might be; whilst the down-trodden snow struck a damp to the feet which ordinary leather seemed powerless to resist.

Walking through the sludge of the streets, shivering at each corner in the teeth of a blast which cut, sharp and stinging, as if it had come but that moment from the North Pole, Robert McCullagh, going over all his grievances, felt as if he hated Alf Mostin. The love he once entertained for him, the affection which not so long ago appeared so exceeding strong, was departed, and he told himself he had hitherto mistaken his cousin's character; and that now, for the first time, he saw the spendthrift, the ne'er-do-weel, the man who had no compunction about dipping his hand into other men's pockets, as he really was.

Once Robert had heard an irate creditor speak of Mr. Alfred Mostin as a 'plausible rascal,' and had felt not unnaturally indignant at such a description of his relative: but now, recalling Alf's long and unprosperous career,—the chances out of which he had made nothing; the loans and gifts, which might as well, for any good they effected, have been cast into the Thames; the eternal getting into debt; the total failure to emerge from it; the shifts, the subterfuges, the dirty water, the humble pie, the false excuses, the hopeful messages, the broken promises, the monotonous round of continual disaster,—Robert as-

sured his own soul Alfred Mostin was not a desirable individual to know, and determined he would see as little of him as possible for the future.

Wherever his cousin went, the model young man reflected angrily, he was preferred before him. He had a way which 'took' people, which deceived them, and which might eventually lead to some very unpleasant complications.

Take Mr. Pousnett, for instance; he was totally wrong in his estimate of the North-street hermit. He did not know the way in which Alf wasted his life; he had not the faintest idea that Mr. Mostin cooked his own bacon for breakfast, and drank spirits-and-water, with a diligence which characterised no other proceeding of his life, far into the small hours of the night. Alf had no idea of respectability. The household gods most men worship seemed to him but as the gods of the heathen. He would sacrifice no single whim or fancy on the social altar. He did not have his boots blacked, or brush his hat, or wear a good coat, or get his hair properly cut, or do anything other people did except wash himself.

He washed far too much, his captious relative decided; '*Far more than I do*,' thought Robert; 'and yet how superior in every respect I look!' Mr. Robert perhaps would have looked the better—as, indeed, Alf Mostin once told him—'if a little of the starch had been got out;' but he deemed himself as near perfection as man could well be.

For years and years who so particular as Robert McCullagh junior as to what he wore, where he went, whom he knew, those he was seen out walking with! Whilst his cousin would go into the gallery of a third-rate theatre

and enjoy himself as much as, or perhaps better than, any swell in the stalls.

Simply, Robert, with the snow insidiously working its way into his boots, and the gloom of that gloomy evening oppressing his soul, felt it was disgusting. He recalled all Alf's sins of omission and commission, all the things he had ever done which he should not have done, all the works he had left unperformed he ought to have cleared away out of hand; and then he returned to the unpardonable fault his cousin had committed of taking Mr. Pousnett's fancy, and causing Robert to receive a snub when he told his chief he knew Alfred Mostin better than he did.

'If Alf comes into the house in any capacity,' considered the new partner, who had been lashing himself up into a state of ridiculous irritation as he paced the sloppy and slippery thoroughfares, 'I will ask Mr. Pousnett whether he can't send me abroad. I never could enter the office comfortably, supposing his coat and hat were hanging on any peg in it.'

And yet he had loved Alf Mostin once, and Alf had helped him in many a difficulty; and they had made the midnight echoes ring with laughter, and Robert had formerly thought his cousin the best and cleverest of men.

And now Alfred Mostin's sins were that he had helped Robert to compass his desires, and that Mr. Pousnett said he liked him.

When once the lawyer's offices were passed at North-street, the visitor was compelled to make his way upward in darkness to Mr. Mostin's rooms. Had that gentleman possessed a gas-burner on either landing, he would have omitted to light it. Once, when expostulated with on the subject,

he expressed a hope one of his numerous duns might break his neck when descending from the office, and so prove a warning to others of the same class, as a kite nailed up against a barn-door is supposed to influence the morals of his fellow birds of prey.

'I often wish,' he said, 'I had some place where I could pull up the ladder after me!' Failing which he made the ascent to his den as difficult as narrow stairs, an awkward turn or two, and an almost total deficiency of light by night or day, could render it.

As, however, Robert McCullagh, after floundering through the Cimmerian darkness of that final flight, opened the office-door, he was met by a perfect illumination of gas. All the burners were in full play; they had been touched evidently by a reckless hand, and were flaring up to the ceiling in a manner which suggested wild indifference to the collector's next visit. The room was quite empty; the blinds had not been drawn down; not the slightest evidence of work or business appeared to warrant such extravagance in the way of expenditure. Robert knocked at the sitting-room door; but receiving no answer, turned the handle, and entered.

The instant, however, he did so, he hurriedly drew back surprised. Seated in the one arm-chair Mr. Mostin's apartment boasted, with her back turned towards him, was a lady. Standing in his favourite attitude beside the chimney-piece was Alfred Mostin, an expression of dismay and discomfiture on his face: he wore the top-coat to which Robert so objected, and his hat, evidently hurriedly cast aside, lay on the shabby pembroke table close at hand.

The lady was doing two things at the same time—talking and

crying; her speech came low and soft, yet in little hysterical gusts that seemed to wave her utterances to and fro, as if wafted hither and thither by a gentle wind.

Robert could not hear her words; indeed, he scarcely stopped long enough to do so. In his amazement he had remained still for an instant; but now he withdrew, closing the door gently after him.

This second movement aroused Mr. Mostin's attention, and with only a word of excuse he followed so quickly that before Robert could leave the office his cousin detained him with the words,

'I am so glad you are here.'

'Why, what's up?' demanded Robert a little sulkily. Here was another sin or complication or indiscretion, he thought, to be added to that long list he had been drawing out as he paced through the mud and the snow to North-street. Here was, perhaps, the key to all the difficulties and disasters of his cousin's life. He had heard the old *mot*, 'Who is she?' and at once jumped to the conclusion that what he had never before suspected was the case. Here was the woman to whom his cousin must be either married or worse. In his smug self-sufficiency Mr. Robert McCullagh had already, in his own mind, preached a condemnatory sermon to, and read the whole Communion Service over, that blackest and most specious of sinners, Alfred Mostin.

Something of this must have been expressed in the new partner's face; for Mr. Mostin, spite of his evident anxiety, laughed as he said,

'You don't know who it is, then?'

'Know! How should I know?' asked Mr. Robert McCullagh,

VOL. XXXIX. NO. CXXXIV.

honestly indignant at the supposition implied.

'The poets are right after all, and Love is blind,' remarked Mr. Mostin carelessly; 'yet I think if I were sweet on a young woman I should by some sign recognise her through a two-foot wall.'

'You don't mean to say—' began Robert.

'Yes, I do,' was the answer.

Almost involuntarily Robert took a step forward to the door of the sitting-room.

'Stop a minute,' said Alfred Mostin, and he began systematically to lower the lights.

Robert was not thinking in the least of his cousin at that moment, yet, as he watched him, he could but notice how Alf's hand trembled, how slow he was about his work, how dreamily abstracted he looked while he moved mechanically about his office.

'He has been drinking,' decided this modern Pharisee, mentally thanking God at the same time he was not as this wretched publican.

'How does she happen to be here—in your rooms?' he inquired, after a pause, sharply, and as one having a right to put the question.

'If you want an answer, you must ask for one in a different manner,' replied Mr. Mostin, with an outward calmness which showed he was, from some cause or other, at a white heat.

'I beg your pardon; I am sure I did not know I spoke offensively; only it seems so very odd.'

'Does it? Then perhaps you will be kind enough to walk downstairs again, and return to whatever place you came from, and leave me to do the best I can for Miss Lilands—as best I can.'

'Alf, old boy, what is the matter with you?' said the younger McCullagh, in unfeigned astonishment.

'What's the matter with you, rather?' returned Mr. Mostin. 'What do you mean by your insinuations and your remarks? Do you suppose she came here to see me—me? Has the partnership with Pousnett—which, by the way, I compassed—so turned your head and twisted your spirit, that you could entertain for a moment the detestable thought your words seemed to imply?'

'I meant nothing, on my word I did not,' said Robert humbly.

Just for a second Mr. Mostin looked him over, then, remarking in an easy dispassionate manner, 'If I thought you had, I'd wring your neck,' he reëntered his sitting-room, closing the door behind him.

The minutes passed. In a very agony of expectation Robert waited, watching as he did so the now dimly-burning lights. After a short pause there came from the next apartment the low hum of conversation. His sharpened ears could hear the soft notes of her voice, and the deeper tones of Mr. Mostin as he spoke shortly in reply.

Evidently they were talking very earnestly. What could it be about? The young man was working himself up into a state of frantic excitement; a dozen times he had taken a stride towards the door with an intention of opening it; for the twentieth time he was pacing the office, moving restlessly from desk to stool, from stool to shelves: it seemed to him that night he grasped more of the poverty of Alf's surroundings than had been the case during all the years of their previous acquaintance. Sometimes he would pause and listen to the murmur of their conversation in the next apartment; again the rattling of some vehicle would drown all other sound. What

could they be saying? Ah, at last his cousin crossed the room, opened the door, closed it again, and advanced to where Robert stood, still waiting for him.

'Have you got any money?' he asked.

Alas, that was what he never possessed! Alack and well a day, that was usually the question with which Mr. Mostin either commenced or finished his best discourses. Money—most important and most accursed of all men's wants—would that the man who first invented you were doomed to pass through, say, a single year of the straits Alf Mostin had known ever since he was old enough to contract debts and be sued for them!

Robert was too seriously in earnest then to smile at his cousin's words, but afterwards he laughed contemptuously over the bare recollection of them.

Money! Why, the fellow never had a sixpence; could not keep one; never knew what it was to be able to insert his fingers in his waistcoat pocket and produce a current coin of the realm, unless he had just borrowed it from some one less impecunious than himself!

'I have some,' he said, in answer; 'how much do you want?'

'I suppose ten shillings would be enough,' conjectured Alfred Mostin; 'but the roads are in a deuce of a state, and I heard the cabmen were refusing fares this afternoon.'

'What are you talking about? Where are you going?' asked Robert, a little peremptorily.

'I was going to see her home,' answered Mr. Mostin; 'but perhaps,' he added, 'you would like to do so.'

For once in his life the fact of not having half a sovereign of his own proved too much for Mr.



Mostin. If he had known from whom else to beg, borrow, or steal that sum, he would not have asked it from his cousin.

'I' repeated Robert, taken utterly by surprise, yet instantly strong in his sense of the proprieties. 'How on earth could I take her home? How, in fact, could either of us?'

'She is not fit to go alone,' said the other deprecatingly. 'Old Napier has knocked her over entirely. He has thrown up the case; told the girl a lot of nasty things, for which I should like to kick him, and for which I very probably shall some day; brought her up from Old Ford in this beastly weather to break her heart, and then coolly shows her out, to get back there again as best she can. I was just coming in when I ran up against her in the passage, crying as I don't think I ever saw a woman cry before. I made her come up here and sit down a bit and tell me the trouble, and now she does not know how to break the news to her mother.'

'What is it that has happened?' inquired Robert, who was beginning to see daylight as regarded his own position in the affair.

'Come in, and I will tell you all about it. We can talk matters over, and see what is best to be done.'

'This is my cousin, Miss Lilands,' he added, pushing open the door, and crossing to the fireplace, followed by Robert, whom he thus lamely introduced. 'He is going to Old Ford, and we may as well drive there in the cab with him.'

Poor Alf Mostin, who was ever ready to lie with so glib a tongue, whose commercial morals were of the very worst, and yet whose heart was of the truest gold, who, looking down at the tear-stained face of that 'little

girl,' as he mentally called her, was filled with the wildest indignation to think any woman should so be made to suffer.

'I was telling him about old Napier, and what a brute he is, and the shock you have had; and we will both of us do all and everything we can, if you are only able to say what you would like.'

'Ah, I shall never like anything again!' she answered, with a pitiful tremor about her lips. 'Mr. Napier said such dreadful things,' she went on, turning to Robert; and then, all in a second, she paused and coloured up to her eyes: 'I think I have seen you before,' she murmured, with a little coy hesitation; 'the day you so kindly helped me. Ah, I was happy that day!' and she turned to Mr. Mostin, glad perhaps to hide her blushing face from Robert's gaze. 'Mr. Napier felt so sure we should win our case. He had taken counsel's opinion, and did not seem to entertain a doubt.'

'But what has caused him to change his idea?' asked Robert anxiously.

'He has heard the report of the other side,' answered Miss Lilands. 'It seems poor mamma blinded herself to the fact there was another side, would see nothing except her own hopes and beliefs; and Mr. Napier is angry because he thinks she wilfully deceived him. O, I don't know how I am to tell mamma; it will kill her!' and Miss Lilands covered her face with her handkerchief, whilst the two men looked at each other in silence.

At length Mr. Mostin spoke softly.

'Go and get a cab, Bob.' He was himself again; he had forgotten another man would have to pay for the cab, in the relief of

knowing for a certainty some one on whom he could rely owned enough to settle the most outrageous overcharge.

'I will tell your mother, Miss Lilands,' he said, as Robert vanished to do his bidding. 'We must break it to her as best we can; and if you and she will trust us, my cousin and myself, perhaps we might find some other lawyer willing and able to take up the case and carry it through to a successful issue.'

The words were hopeful, and as he spoke them Alf Mostin felt they had been dictated by a sort of inspiration; but Miss Lilands only shook her head.

'You are so very kind,' she said, in her pretty graceful way; 'but there is nothing more to be done. I see quite clearly that poor mamma made some great mistake about it all. We really had no right to the money. She hoped, and then she gradually got to regard her hopes as certainties. Only Mr. Napier need not have been so cruel. I am sure mamma never meant to deceive him or any one else, and we will pay him all we owe. He said we never would; but he does not know us, does not understand that we would rather starve than be dishonest.'

O sweet frank eyes! O tender truthful voice! O heart which held no shifting sands of deceit, no guile, no equivocation! Small marvel that for a moment Alf Mostin's gaze sought the floor as he contrasted his own life of twisting and doubling with the calm honest innocence of the girl who sat beside his hearth.

How even her tears seemed to brighten and glorify that humble room! How lovely any room would have appeared to this poor scampish sinner which framed her young beauty, her womanly ten-

derness, her charming wisdom! Ah, well! Alf Mostin knew no such good gift was in store for him; that, let the future bring what it would, it never could conduct him one step towards a wife like Janey Lilands.

'Wrap your shawl well round you,' he said, when at length he heard his cousin's step on the stairs. 'No, allow me;' and he drew the wrap close about her soft white throat, fastening in the brooch securely.

'I could wish,' he thought afterwards, 'women, all of them, did not regard me quite so much as their grandfather or their brother;' for she evidently did not mind the slight familiarity she certainly would have resented from another man. She did not know how his hand shook and his colour came and went; but Robert noted all these signs and tokens, and, failing to comprehend what they meant, was confirmed in his opinion that 'Alf had been drinking.'

No such idea, however, crossed Miss Lilands' mind, as he drew her arm within his own to conduct her down the difficult staircase, as he handed her into the cab, and took his place opposite to her, Robert following and seating himself beside his cousin.

Almost in silence the journey was performed. They reached the cottage; the little maid opened the door and said,

'Your mamma has been in a way about you, miss!'

They all entered the parlour together, and then instantly Mrs. Lilands, looking in her daughter's face, cried out,

'What has happened, Janey? What is wrong?'

For answer Janey only cast herself on her mother's breast, and then Mr. Mostin spoke.

He never afterwards could tell,

neither could any of them subsequently remember precisely, what he said, but he told the story somehow.

Calmly enough Mrs. Lilands put her daughter aside, and stood erect listening to his words.

She did not make a single comment or put a solitary question. When he had quite finished, she remained staring at him

for about the space of time in which one could slowly count five; then she swayed back, and would have fallen to the ground but that Robert caught her.

Another minute and Alfred Mostin had opened the hall-door and rushed out, leaped the paling, and was speeding through the darkness of that unknown neighbourhood for the nearest doctor.

*(To be continued.)*

---

## DREAM MEMORIES.

---

WHEN the spring creeps up through the golden glades,  
And the woodlands sleep in their daffodil bed,  
In the dreaming time, ere the daylight fades,  
Will you think of a dream that was long since dead?  
Will you think of the spring when first we met,  
And of April suns that for ever have set?

When the world is red with the summer rose,  
And sweet with the music of mellow June,  
Will you miss some light when the sunset glows,  
Till the song of the summer seem scarce in tune?  
Will you say how swiftly the June days went  
In the fulness of last year's sweet content?

When the reapers rest in the ruddy gold  
Of the ripening fields on the breezy down,  
Will you think of the time when our tale was told,  
And our hopes were ripe for the reaping down?  
When the fields of life that flowered of late  
Were stripped and swept by the scythe of Fate.

When the world is awaiting the spring's sweet prime,  
And the snow lies soft over forest and field,  
Will you think how we wept in the winter time,  
Ere the pain of our parting was numbed and healed?  
When the 'love of your life-time' was just new-born,  
And your 'life-long sorrow' was scarce out-worn?

A life-long sorrow! I mind me yet,  
When we stood in the glow of the golden grain;  
'Twere better, you said, that I should forget,  
'For the greater half of a love is pain.'  
Ah, true! He who loves most, the most endures;  
But the 'life-long sorrow' is mine—not yours!

## A DAY AT MONTE CARLO.

---

STAYING a few days at Nice last summer, it was of course necessary to go over to Monte Carlo. The Riviera is lonely and deserted in the summer, so far as the influx of foreigners is concerned; but at the same time this lovely region shows at its loveliest in its own proper summer season, and for many Frenchmen and Italians this is the favourite time. All through the year there is never any time when the gorgeous saloons of M. le Blanc are untenanted. For many people there is a kind of confusion between Monaco and Monte Carlo. In one of the London papers the other day a correspondent was writing as if they were two entirely different places. He was, I think, contrasting the gambling that goes on at Monaco with that at Monte Carlo. Now Monte Carlo is the gambling district of Monaco. There is no gambling at all in what is now distinctively called Monaco. All the gambling is done on the opposite height of Monte Carlo, which is part of the slender Monaco territory. It may be said only recently to have come into existence. The old historic castle of Monaco crowns the height. It commands the expanse of the lovely sea; its ramparts look down on the tiny town, and the groves and terraces overhanging the shore. There the tiniest of European sovereignties has for centuries maintained its semi-independence. The once grim castle, now decorated and refurbished up after the nineteenth-century pattern, is mixed up with much of

French and Italian, and even of English, history. Here Addison came on a tour, and here died H.R.H. the Duke of York, brother of George III. On the opposite side of the valley rise the heights called Monte Carlo. It is under the kingship of M. Blanc, and is rapidly outgrowing the mediæval Monaco in splendour and population. It is a busy town, and long lines of villas climb the slopes which are dominated by the Grand Casino and the groups of buildings that are massed around it. There is no wonder that there is a large and increasing town at the base of Monte Carlo, known familiarly as Condamine. For, only provided that you are of age, and have obtained the ticket, which is never really refused, you have the entire run of those gorgeous saloons; the gardens, reading-rooms, and the fine music are all at your service, and everything is maintained for your comfort and amusement without the smallest expenditure of your own.

There are several ways of getting over from Nice to Monaco. You may go direct by rail to the railway-station of Monte Carlo. The station opens almost at once on the grounds of the casino. You must be careful to note the difference between Paris and Rome time, such difference being some forty-five minutes. As you wait, you may be cheered by the music of a lordly band not many feet above your head. Or you may go by the Cornice road, past Turbia, which here rises to the greatest altitude, and commands the

most striking points of view. Or there is generally a steamer going once or twice a day, and, when the weather is fine, a cruise on the ultramarine of the Mediterranean is most enjoyable. I devised my own way of travelling, which was partly by water, partly on foot, and partly by the railway. The distance is short enough in any case, but in each case it is a journey over which you may linger for delighted hours. I go by rail to Villafranca, one of the quaintest, cleanest, and most interesting of towns. If I should go out to spend a winter on the Riviera, I think I should give up the Anglicised Nice and Mentone, and go to Villafranca, Ventimiglia, or Alassio. The climate of Villefranche is certainly much better than that of Nice. You look at the old castle and the fleet of fishing-boats by the pier. You hire a boat, and intend to cross the bay to the village of St. Jean. The boatman will ask, and possibly obtain, any number of francs; but one is quite sufficient, and he will probably despise you if you give more. And to be in a boat on that lovely bay is most enjoyable both in fact and in retrospect. You land on the primitive little pier, and through olive-woods and gardens you reach the other side of the promontory. On the right is the charming village of St. Jean. Here whole days might be whiled away in delicious ease. You get capital fish-dinners; you have silence, rest, repose. As for fruits, in the summer you may get figs or peaches a penny a dozen in these Riviera villages. It would certainly be much better to spend one's available time in quiet spots like this than in fevered fashionable Monaco, which, indeed, has a disturbing influence on all the localities. Then there is a very lovely footpath skirting the sea,

with the fig-trees overhanging, and taxing all one's honesty to refrain from picking and stealing. You time your walk so as to rejoin the rail at Beaulieu or Eza; but however bent on Monte Carlo, you should make a point of getting out at Monaco Station, within a very easy walk of the castle.

You must be careful, if you wish to see the castle, to be there within the specified hours. The officials seem delighted to show their contempt of strangers by refusing to make the slightest concession to civility or kindly consideration. At least that is the experience of some of us. Perhaps the heavy banner of the Grimaldis may be floating over the castle (two monks supporting a shield), a token that the Prince is at home. There is something very striking in the old castle, with portcullis, bastions, draw-bridges. On the *place d'armes* in front of the castle people wander about, overlooking the rocks and the sea, and at times resting on benches, admiring the trees and the gardens. The batteries, guns, and fortifications belong to the period of Louis XIV. But the well-read student knows that the rocky spot has one of the most authentic and extraordinary histories. Beyond Louis XIV. it goes back to the time of Frederick Barbarossa; beyond that, to the days of the Roman Empire, and days of dimmer tradition still. France bought up the whole territory, except Monaco and a strip of territory three miles long, for four millions of francs. Besides the private garden of the palace, there is a noble public garden with terraces overhanging the bay, and at times there are a number of yachts in the little port. In the old mediæval time a fine buccaneering reputation belonged to Monaco. We only change names,

and not essential things. There are such people as land-pirates, and a fine modern buccaneering reputation belongs to that part of Monaco known as Monte Carlo.

The absolute luxury and completeness of all the appointments at Monte Carlo is indeed wonderful. I have seen something of gilded saloons in my time, but none have been so gorgeous as Monte Carlo. The Tuileries, in the palmiest days of the Empire, were not more splendid. There was a distinct advance even on the lavish management of Hombourg and Wiesbaden. Here is the Concert-room, where, in the season, Patti will pour forth her golden strains. No club in London, not even the Athenæum, has so goodly a collection of all the best periodicals in the world. Then there are music and theatricals at times, and always the vivid dramatic interest of the gambling-tables. The gambling was very quiet and modified, compared with what it is generally in the height of the season. Urbanity and politeness are the order of the day. I watched the gambling, which was conducted with good taste and good temper. I put down my own modest venture, which was ruthlessly swept away. But in the case of at least two other players, though they lost large sums, they gained still larger, and the balance was decidedly in their favour. Then of course there were the people trying their system, the 'system' which is supposed must always prove victorious in the long-run. In these saloons the interest always goes with the large players. But perhaps there is a more painful and intense interest with the moderate players. I noticed a young fellow playing very warily, and generally for the smallest stakes allowed. He only put five-

franc pieces on different colours. His young wife watched him anxiously, and retired to a distant settee. He was good enough to enter into a conversation with me, and explain his strategy. He said that on an average he was able to win a napoleon a day. He was never rash. It was evident to me that on his limited scale he must have shown a rare amount of tact, coolness, and self-restraint. It was just possible that he might pay his modest way. But the same qualities in any business career might have given him name and fortune. And I could never forget the young wife's pallid anxious face, and the ever-present possibility that he might be tempted to lose his available stock of napoleons.

I move about the place. If I want shops, café, or hotel, they are all within a minute's walk. Opposite the place there is a square, and a fine boulevard close by. The Hôtel de Paris will give you a good dinner. The ices and coffee are irreproachable. The tropic beauty of the garden is something wonderful, even on this wonderful coast. You will be especially struck with the palm-trees and aloes, and, if you go in the summer, with the blaze of colours. But the subtle attraction of the tables is the most attractive of all. The great games are of course *rouge et noir* and roulette. You find that, though you do not play yourself, you become intensely interested by the fortunes of the game, and the study of those who win or those who lose. But of course those who come to these tables are hardly satisfied with philosophic observation. All along the shores of the Riviera there is a rich idle population, from Nice on the west and from Genoa on the east, that is within easy reach of Monte Carlo. In addition to



this it is the lode-star for gamblers all over the world. The place is the *sentina gentium*. The people who come during the winter as invalids have their friends and relations, who are willing enough to beguile the tedium of attending rich friends by repeated visits to this splendid palace, and sometimes the invalids themselves will be willing to come over, not without hazard to their health, pockets, and reputations.

There are probably many cases of misery and suicide connected with this smiling hell of which the public have very little idea. If anybody has made up his mind to blow his brains out, the Administration will obligingly furnish him with sufficient funds to enable him to do so leisurely at a distance. But the number of suicides in the immediate neighbourhood is very great; and a regular list is carefully compiled and published by those who have no good will to the 'peculiar institution.' Constant efforts are made, to which it is impossible not to wish success, to abolish it altogether. No doubt the French Government could put sufficient pressure on the Prince to compel him to do so. Already the little Republic of Andorra in the Pyrenees is beset by two factions, the one wishing to abolish public gaming-tables, and the other to retain things on the present basis. At the very time when I was visiting Monte Carlo a terrible tragedy happened, which I will mention, as it came within the range of my own personal observation. It is only an example, of which many similar instances might be cited. The case was that of a gentleman, of good family and position, a married man with a young family. He lived in the neighbourhood of Monte Carlo, and attended the

tables with much regularity. He lived in one place after another, shifting his quarters from Nice to Mentone, and thence to some other locality. He ran up long bills; but as his name and family were well known he was treated leniently, and received plenty of credit. But it became perfectly obvious that all his money went in gambling. At last the patience of the landlord of the hotel was exhausted. The police called on him to 'invite him' to explain the circumstances of those large unpaid bills at hotels. Then the poor man was brought to book. He begged the officers to retire, and call again in an hour, as he had some matters of business to arrange. For nearly an hour he occupied himself in writing letters to his wife and family, explaining the errors into which he had fallen. When the officers returned they found him quite dead: he had hung himself behind his bedroom door. The story was told me by the landlord of my hotel at Mentone on the evening of my return, and I also saw a confirmation of the fact in the local papers.

It is a mistake to suppose, as is so commonly done by tourists, that the Prince of Monaco draws his revenues from M. Le Blanc and the gaming-tables. He has always been a Duke of France, and with considerable revenues drawn from France. I believe, however, that it is a fact that M. Le Blanc has entirely relieved him from all expenditure relating to public improvements and the maintenance of public order. Formerly the army of Monaco resembled that of a petty German court, of which it was reported that the infantry was in very good condition, but that extensive disease prevailed among the cavalry. However, there was only a single

soldier for the cavalry, and one only for the infantry. This reminds me of one of Charles Lever's stories of an official report made concerning an Irish church. The report made was that the congregation was small, but exceedingly orderly and attentive. It appeared, however, upon inquiry that the congregation consisted exclusively of the sexton's mother. I remember seeing a number of years ago a list of the Prince's Administration. It was considerably longer than a list of the English Ministry; but then such a humble individual as the postman figured as an important member of the Government. From two or three soldiers M. Le Blanc has raised the full effective strength to no fewer than sixty. For all intents and purposes Le Blanc is the real prince and the great historic name. It is impossible not to perceive that the vast material prosperity attained is the result of system and order and of profuse liberality. You wonder at many things. You wonder what are the beverages of which the croupiers partake so heavily, and which never disturb

the clear eye and steady hand. You wonder where the chests of gold and silver are stowed away. You wonder how far *salus conscientia*, respectable conscientious people, who perhaps utterly refuse to play, can enjoy the concert-rooms and saloons with the full knowledge how this prodigal splendour is kept up. I take the last train to Mentone, and before I go to bed I have a gossip with the landiord. We talk of the colossal fortunes M. Blanc gave his daughters, and how through the marriage of one of them he became connected with the Napoleons, though the worst member of that family. We talk of the 'system' players and of the 'company' that have challenged the bank, and of the private fortunes that have been lost and won and lost again. Then we have the horrible stories of poison, rope, pistol, shattered brains, and broken hearts. As I fall asleep the music is crashing in my ears; I recall the heavy perfumes of foliage and flowers; and then a sudden miasma comes over all the scene, and dolorous voices as from the abysmal pit.

### THREE STRANGE OLD INNS.

---

IN these days of universal reform, iconoclasm, and prose, it is refreshing sometimes to turn aside from the beaten paths of our lives, and to spend a little time with our ancestors. We fully admit the benefits conferred upon us by open space, light, and ventilation; by rapidity of travelling, telegraphs, and telephones; but we are loth to let them drive every atom of romance and poetry out of our constitutions, and we find a soothing influence in travelling backwards, as it were, and taking a holiday in the realms of the past.

Lovers of old London have been recently startled by the announcement that Barnard's Inn has been doomed. Let us hurry there ere the first hoarding is put up, and ere Bill and Pat commence their operations.

We leave the bustle and noise of Holborn, and pass immediately beneath an unpretentious little archway into the precincts of this the smallest and least-known of the Inns of Court. There is little to strike the eye, and still less to strike the ear; for the brown old buildings have nothing but a staid, modest, old-world quaintness about them, and the silence, after the turmoil of the great thoroughfare but a few yards away, is, to use a 'bull,' startling. We are in the 'outer quad,' an imposing title given to a space some twelve yards square, ornamented by a solitary drooping tree, and but rarely visited by a ray of sunshine. The little hall, with its battered

cupola and its range of quaintly latticed heraldically-embazoned windows, faces us; and sombre stone-bound buildings of the early eighteenth-century type occupy the remaining three sides. Passing through a second archway, we find ourselves in the 'inner quad,' a considerable space of ground, wherein try to flourish some half-dozen trees, and enclosed on two sides by picturesque buildings of the Elizabethan period, many gabled, many chimneyed, and many windowed, with little dark doorways leading by tortuous rickety staircases up to dark little sets of chambers. The birds sing loudly here when the leaves are out, and the sun tints the sombre old place with a feeble imitation of gaiety. But on a winter's morning there are no leaves, no birds, and no sun; not a footfall wakes the echoes of the courts, and a fitter abode for the student, the recluse, or the man of letters, we cannot call to mind in this great city. The pump on our right hand has a 'yarn' attached to it—a 'yarn,' like most of its class, to be taken with a very large grain of salt. When the Lord George Gordon rioters were at the height of their frenzy and passion, they set fire to a distillery in Holborn (for details of which the reader is requested to refer to *Barnaby Rudge*), and the liquor floating in streams down the streets was eagerly lapped up by the maddened crowd. Many of the wretches, who in their haste and fury had drunk boiling spirits,

rushed through the archways of Barnard's Inn to the pump. There they attempted to alleviate their torments; and for many years after it was said that the water of the pump was so strongly impregnated with spirits as to be utterly useless for drinking purposes. How the fact that spirit-sodden men had drunk at the nose of the pump could affect the water of the well has never been accounted for. But the 'yarn' still clings to the pump, and probably will until, with the inn itself, it is removed. It is true, however, that the buildings on the pump side of the 'quad,' were burnt down during these riots, and that the existing houses were erected immediately after. The porter admits us into the apartment termed 'hall' by the same expansion of ideas which has christened the first yard a 'quad.'

Twenty people might dine here, not more; but when there is a dinner, we are informed that it is second to none in London for abundance and excellence. The Hall is dark, cosy, warm, and comfortable, as an old inn-hall should be; curiously-painted windows shed a soft half-light into the room; at each end stands a huge fireplace, so near to the head chairs at the table that, to the occupiers of them, a long dinner must be somewhat of an ordeal. Against one wall stands a magnificent oak side-board, stained black by time, embellished with much quaint carving and the arms of Mackworth, the original founder of the inn. As we sit in the high-backed president's chair, we cannot help picturing the old fellows in the doublet and hose of Queen Bess, or in the bagwig and ruffles of Anne, solemnly and silently 'discussing' their banquets, and afterwards, under the influence of the choice liquors from the cool cellars

below, keeping up jest, gossip, and argument into the small hours of the morning. Holt, Burleigh, Bacon certainly—and perhaps his Majesty King Charles II.—ate many an excellent dinner in this old hall, and their features still peer out at us from canvases which Time has blackened almost as effectually as he has the walls upon which they hang.

Long before the first mail-coach was announced to run from Oxford to London between sunrise and sunset, a feat at that time looked upon as little short of the marvellous, the Borough inns were famous. In fact, from London Bridge to where the Bricklayers' Arms Railway Station now stands, one in every dozen houses was an inn, and amongst these were some of the most famous in London. Gradually the last survivors are disappearing. The old Bricklayers' Arms was swept away about the beginning of last year, and a pretentious gin-palace erected on its site. A famous old inn it was, if we are to believe a framed and glazed list of great men who had visited it during the past four hundred years, which hung in the old bar. The King's Head is almost demolished; the White Hart, immortalised by its association with Sam Weller, is falling-in of sheer decrepitude; the Queen's Head, the Half Moon, and the George alone remain unchanged and in good preservation. Of these the George is, perhaps, the best worthy of a visit. Nine people out of ten, passing along the crowded bustling street, would pass the entrance to the old place without noticing it; for it stands hidden up a deep archway, which is more often than not blocked up by railway vans. We are glad to note so little evidence of the spirit of innovation and improvement: the old galleries still exist, al-

though the voices of the deft chambermaids and the jangling of innumerable bells have long since been hushed; the great cavernous stables and outhouses, into which the Comet and Express vanished at night, and whence they reappeared in the morning all glorious in clean-washed paint and burnished metal, still are there. Time and reform have not metamorphosed the quaint little many-cornered bar, with its shelves of curious old punchbowls and mighty drinking-glasses, its sturdy little barrels of strong waters, and its strings of lemons, into a marble counter, florid with gilding and carving. Still may we obtain at this little bar one of the best glasses of claret in London; and if claret be not to the taste, a pewter of real, unadulterated, clear, bright Kentish ale, such as the stage drivers and guards loved in the olden days. We may lunch in the long dark coffee-room hung round with scenes from the hunting-field, and portraits of the old Kent cricketers,—Box, Alfred Mynn, 'Farmer' Bennett, and others. It is rather lonely now, and the long table looks forlorn; but we may people it at will with the stalwart farmers, the sunburnt squires, and the gay folk arrived from the Wells at Tonbridge; we may load the table with rounds of beef and huge tankards of ale; and we may imagine 'Gentleman Jim,' the guard, putting his honest red face into the room, with his 'Ten minutes more, gents, please! Good sense, and a veneration for antiquity not often to be met with in the modern British landlord, have ruled with the present proprietor; and he is proud of his old place, and refuses to admit that it has had its day. 'I have gentlemen come to me every year at the hop-sales time,' he says, 'who

come just because their fathers and grandfathers have always come here before them.'

Up-stairs there are nests of old rooms, some of which still retain the picturesque hangings and furniture of old times; long dark passages, flights of rickety stairs, odd little cupboards and landings where least they are to be looked for, and quaintly latticed windows commanding extensive views of roof and chimney-pot. Sunday morning should be chosen for a visit to the George; for on other days the ideas are disturbed by the continual groaning and rumbling of the railway vans in the yard, the coarse shouts and oaths of the carmen, and the shrieking of the railway whistles hard by. The hum of the outside world has ceased, and there is a universal calm and quiet which harmonises well with the sturdy old buildings and the old memories they call up.

Brockley, on the Brighton Railway, was twenty years ago as rural and as sequestered a spot as could be found within a ten-mile radius from Charing Cross. But Brockley has gone the way of all rural and sequestered spots within that boundary line, and promises, if it continues to grow and expand as it has during the past five years, to vie with any metropolitan suburb in size and ugliness. On leaving the Brockley Station the explorer's eye ranges over a vast expanse of yellow, flimsy, one-brick-thick rows of houses and villas, interspersed with fifth-rate shops and first-rate gin-palaces. Every familiar feature of the cockney suburb abounds at Brockley. The coarse-voiced huckster with his cart of fish or fruit, the swarms of yelling children, perambulators, melancholy processions of 'Establishments for Young Ladies,' linen hanging out to dry, barrel-organs,

and unwieldy policemen. And yet Brockley has a lion, 'unknown,' as Mrs. Gamp would say, to the majority of the inhabitants as a lion, but simply as the 'Jack.'

The Brockley Jack is still the beau-ideal of a country inn. The yellow villas are creeping towards it, but have not quite reached it; there are fine tall trees yet about it, and there are green fields yet around it. The house itself is heavy roofed and manychimneyed, after the good old style. Doors and windows seem to have been pushed through its walls to suit the immediate caprices and whims of many generations of landlords; a staircase outside the house leads to a sort of state room, wherein of old the village philosophers held their meetings, and wherein at the present day the wayfarer is regaled with ham and eggs, watercress, and tea. (Here it may be noted that when an inn cannot serve up ham and eggs on demand, its claim to true rusticity may be regarded as *nil*.) The Jack stands back from the road, and has in front of it a splendid elm, under which is a good old-fashioned seat, and upon which is hung the weather-beaten sign of the Jack—a two-handed leather bottle—and the jaw-bone of a whale painted green. Touching this jaw-bone, inquiry has failed to elicit a reliable response; but we have been told that a former landlord, having compiled a competency on the North Sea, hung it up as a memento. The Jack is famous now for its prime ale and its picturesque appearance; in the olden time, however, it was very much otherwise famous.

The field which lies along the stabling and outhouses of the inn was a favourite rendezvous in the latter part of the last century for duellists. Tradition tells of a cer-

tain Captain Turnbull who, when on recruiting service in those parts, put up at the Jack, and fell in love with the landlord's pretty daughter. The wench had a sweetheart in the village, a strapping young waggoner, who eyed the advances of the gallant officer with anything but pleasure. The captain, however, made such progress in the affections of the fickle damsel that she allowed him to take an evening walk with her. Unfortunately the sturdy sweetheart happened to be walking out at the same time, and met the happy couple. Angry words ensued, and the upshot was that the Brockley man challenged the captain to fight, not with cold steel or with pistols, but in the good old English style of hand to hand. The captain, although he doubtless considered that he was lowering himself, accepted the gage of battle. Next day they fought for three hours, at the expiration of which time the rustic dealt the captain such a tremendous blow behind the ear that he fell dead. On another occasion two sea-skippers from Greenwich quarrelled over their cups, unsheathed their swords, stepped into the field, and fought until one fell pierced to the heart and the other was carried away so grievously wounded that he died within a couple of hours. When the 'First Gentleman' was Prince Regent, and prize-fighting was in the zenith of its popularity, many a bloody battle was fought in Brockley fields, and the Jack drove a roaring trade; but the nuisance at length became so intolerable to the neighbours that the 'pugs' were driven further a-field.

From other causes also the Jack gained celebrity. Travellers who, for reasons of their own, wished to avoid the publicity of



the old Kent road, through New Cross, chose this route through Brockley as being more lonely and unknown, and joined the main road either at Penge Common or at Bromley. Gentlemen of the road, 'minions of the moon,' cut straight across here from their happy hunting-ground at Blackheath, favoured by a densely-wooded scantily-populated country; and the landlord of the Jack rarely declined to accept a handsome *douceur* as the price of his ignorance in the case of a hue and cry.

One landlord, however, was cunningly trapped. A robbery with violence in broad daylight had been effected on the Dover road at Blackheath; that same night two men, travel-soiled and agitated, arrived at the Jack. As they brought with them luggage to some extent, and as they were exceedingly anxious that it should be stowed away and that their presence should be kept strictly secret, the landlord made no doubt but that his lodgers were highwaymen. A few hours later two other men arrived like the first, with port-manteaux, and solicitous that their presence should be kept quiet. His surprise in the morning may be imagined when his first lodgers showed themselves in their true light of Bow-street runners, and arrested him and the two gentlemen who had arrived late at night, and who were convicted and hung for the Blackheath robbery.

Smugglers from the riverside found the great stables and out-houses favourable receptacles for their goods; and until a comparatively recent date the traveller, by paying for it, might have obtained a cup of genuine 'right Nantes' which had never paid duty, and which was said to have been a portion of a 'run,' the owner of which had been captured ere he could reach Brockley to claim his own.

Artists sketch the old inn, pedestrians slake their thirst in the dark old bar, and the inhabitants of the yellow villas go about their daily avocations, but scarcely one man in a hundred knows any more about the Jack than that it is picturesque and that the ale there is excellent.

How long it will retain its picturesque appearance it is hard to say. As has been above remarked, the yellow villas are creeping up to it, and the fields wherein the famous prizefights and duels took place are placarded as 'To be let on Building Lease.' The destroyer works so silently and so rapidly that what exists to-day as it has existed for hundreds of years may be hoarded up to-morrow, and in the following week may be seen half demolished.

So let us view these old landmarks whilst we may; and amongst those that still exist in and about our great rapidly-changing metropolis, few, we venture to say, will so well repay the explorer as these 'three strange old inns.'

## FEEDING THE PIGEONS AT VENICE.

---

AROUND their heads a fluttered crowd  
Of birds let loose from heaven's light,  
About their feet a murmur loud  
From tame doves scattered left and right,  
And over all the golden haze  
Of sun that crowned the day's delight.

I stood in cloistered shadows dim,  
And watched the chequered rays that dwell  
The time-worn marble floor within :  
Ah me ! and I remember well  
The fair sweet face upturned to smile,  
On which the slanting sunrays fell.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fair as a pictured saint she stood,  
The bird upon her finger-tips ;  
What should it care for flower or wood,  
When rosebuds were her tender lips ?  
And in the shadows of her eyes,  
More soft than brown brook-waters, lay  
Such sweet awakened sympathies,  
I wished I were the bird that day.

Her bounteous hand that gave them food  
Had yet no gracious boon for me ;  
She in the warm live sunlight stood,  
I in the shade she could not see ;  
And all above the light of heav'n,  
And all below the restless wings,  
And in my brain, like nails fast-riven,  
Was stamped the memory of these things.

The world and I are older now  
By many a sadder year and day,  
And lines are scored across my brow,  
And dreams and loves have passed away ;  
But yet within my heart I hold  
That scene, that face, that smile divine ;  
I would that I her mem'ry filled,  
As she has filled and haunted mine !

RITA.



FEEDING THE PIGEONS AT VENICE.



## FORTUNES MADE IN BUSINESS.

### XXIII.

MESSRS. THOMAS WILSON, SONS, & CO., THE HULL SHIPOWNERS.

In the olden time, the vagabond fraternity were accustomed to pray for deliverance 'from Hell, Hull, and Halifax.' The linking together of these three places, in this beggars' litany, has been sufficiently explained by Fuller, who relates that idle and dishonest persons were afraid of risking their bodies in Halifax because of the Gibbet Law that prevailed there, and avoided Hull for the reason that it was 'terrible unto them as a town of good government, where vagrants meet with punitive charity, and, 'tis to be feared, are oftener corrected than amended.' Much of the 'good government' to which the historian refers was due, it is probable, to a strong determination on the part of the thrifty burgesses of Hull to protect their own particular interests rather than a desire for perfect justice. The early merchant-adventurers of Hull were a bold and hardy race, and made the most of whatever opportunities were presented to them of improving their material prosperity, and advancing the position of the town as a trading port. They had, moreover, a manner of asserting themselves which kept strangers and solicitants in awe; neither beggar nor prince could be permitted to trifle with the citizens of Hull. As a mark of the spirit that ruled amongst these founders of the Humber seaport's prosperity may be mentioned the significant incident of the wine-

tasting dispute between the Mayor and Aldermen of Hull and the Archbishop of York, in the year 1378. The Archbishop insisted that he had the right to the first taste, and advanced, crozier in hand, accompanied by forty trusty followers, to carry his right into force; but the Mayor repelled the prelate's attack by wresting the crozier from him, and 'laying about him so furiously' that many persons were injured and a riot was with difficulty prevented. From Hull, therefore, it was natural that those who could not or would not fully subscribe to the wishes of her governors should earnestly desire deliverance.

In its early days, when wool and leather were its chief exports, and wines its leading imports, the town was known as Wyke-upon-Hull; but when Edward I. became absolute owner of the soil, by purchase, as well as sovereign lord, the royal charter which constituted it a free borough altered its name to Kyngeston-super-Hull, and Kingston-upon-Hull it remains to this day. The convenient and commanding situation of the port rendered it peculiarly suitable for the development of the shipping trade, and it rapidly rose to the position of the third port in the realm. In 1279 the three principal English ports were Boston, London, and Hull, the amount of customs duties collected at those places being: Boston, 3599*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.*; London,

1602*l.* 16*s.* 6*d.*; Hull, 1086*l.* 10*s.* 8*d.* The warden to whom Edward I. delegated the protection of his rights and the collection of customs at Hull was Richard Oysel, and this same Richard employed numerous ships in the interests of his royal master. It was to private enterprise then, however, as it has been since, that the shipping trade of Hull was mainly indebted to its success, and the records of Edward I.'s period tell of one John de Bedford, who was a famous Hull shipowner in those days, and combined a little adventurous privateering with his more legitimate occupation. On one occasion this John de Bedford had the tables turned upon him in a rather clever manner by a Norwegian trader, Suaro Aslaa, and was nearly successful in bringing about a war between England and Norway. In 1313, it seems, one of John de Bedford's ships captured a vessel belonging to Suaro Aslaa, valued, with cargo, at 300*l.*; and three years later the Norwegian returned the compliment by possessing himself of one of De Bedford's ships. Instead of quietly accepting this as an excusable act of retribution, the Hull shipowner made bitter complaint to the King (Edward II.), and urged his Majesty to take prompt measures to resent upon the Norwegian this affront to British supremacy upon the seas. Edward II. thereupon sent a letter to the King of Norway demanding the restoration of the Hull merchantman to its owner; but the Norseman returned answer that he preferred to let the matter remain where it was, and by his tone of defiance almost provoked Edward into taking the quarrel upon himself and sending the English fleet to chastise the saucy Norwegian.

Fortunately, the affair was al-

lowed to stop at that point; for, great as John de Bedford was, he was by no means the only shipowner in Hull. The De la Poles were by this time upon the scene, and were bringing to bear upon the progress of the town an amount of business spirit, tact, and enterprise which accelerated the advancement of Hull's prosperity in a remarkable degree. This illustrious trading family rose to great wealth and eminence, and for several generations its members were of service to the state in providing the 'sinews of war' from time to time, and otherwise rendering aid when their sovereign was compelled to raise large sums by speedy means. The first William de la Pole had settled at Ravensrod, a neighbouring seaport, which fell into decay as rapidly as Hull expanded into celebrity; and so great was the esteem in which he was held by his monarch, that he received the honour of knighthood. The operations of the house of De la Pole extended to all parts of the continent of Europe, and many were the ships that they had continually going to and fro with merchandise over the North Sea and braving the dangers of the English Channel. And in those days there were other dangers than storm and tempest, rocks and quicksands; bands of pirates infested the seas, and numerous were the levies that they made upon the Humber merchantmen. But, despite all dangers and drawbacks, the De la Poles prospered, and the sons of Sir William, transferring the headquarters of their firm to Hull, became even more prosperous than their father. It must have been a proud day for Hull when Edward III. was entertained by William de la Pole (son of Sir William) at his mansion in High-street, Hull, and a proud day for



the King also, for his host on that occasion lent him 1000*l.* in gold. It was in order to oblige his Majesty that William de la Pole came to engage in banking transactions, borrowing money largely from other merchants to swell the loans to the State. In a charter issued by Edward while in France, in 1339, the obligation the King was under to the Hull merchant is thus recorded: 'Know that our faithful and well-beloved subject, William de la Pole, presently after our coming to the parts on this side of the sea, hearing and understanding that our affairs were, for want of money, very dangerously deferred, and being sensible of our wants, came in person unto us, and to us and our followers made, and procured to be made, such a supply of money that by his means our honour hath been preserved. The said William undertook the payment of great sums for us to divers persons, for which he engaged himself by bonds and obligations; and if he had not done so we could not by any means have been supplied, but must necessarily, with a great deal of reproach, have abandoned our journey and our designs.' For such services as these it was only natural that William de la Pole should receive title and honour, being made, amongst other things, a baron of the Exchequer. His descendants, thanks to the wealth and footing he gave them, achieved still higher positions in the councils of the nation, the offices of Lord High Admiral, Lord Chancellor, Commander-in-Chief, and Prime Minister having been filled at one time or another by members of this renowned family. The throne itself seemed within their reach at one time, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, being the declared heir-presumptive to the Crown, at the

time of his death in 1487, when the name disappeared altogether from the annals of the State.

From the period of the De la Poles downward, the shipowners of Hull have been an important element in the commercial history of this country. John Tutbury, who flourished in the early part of the fifteenth century, was a prominent Hull shipowner, and possessed the good-will of his fellow-citizens in such a degree, that he was six times elected to serve the office of Mayor of the borough. In those days the Hull ships brought to England paving-stones, bow-staves, wines, Spanish iron, broadcloth, and many other articles which we have since been able to produce in far more liberal quantities than the countries from which we formerly imported such things. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Society of Merchant Adventurers did much for the prosperity of Hull; and the founding and carrying forward of the Northern Whale Fishery was also productive of additional wealth to the port. The town experienced its periods of depression, it is true; but, for the most part, was able to hold its own in the shipping world, feeling less of the fluctuations of commercial life than might have been expected, seeing how great the changes were at other seaports on the English coast. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, London was the first port in the kingdom, Boston the second, Southampton the third, Lincoln the fourth, Lynn the fifth, and Hull the sixth. Eighty years later Boston held the first place, London the second, and Hull the third, although a long way behind. Towards the close of the sixteenth century, Lynn was the most important port, Hull came second, and Yarmouth, Exeter, and Bristol

followed in the order named; while Boston, which for so long a period had stood at the head of English trading ports, had declined to the tenth position, Poole, Chester, Plymouth, and Newcastle being before her in point of commercial importance. It says much, therefore, for the people of Hull that they were able to sustain the prosperity of their port during all these centuries of change.

The Hull whaling community suffered severely in the time of the wars with France, the press-gangs making desperate inroads upon the fleets returning from Greenland, when men were required for Nelson's fleet. It is worth while quoting an advertisement which was put forth in Hull in 1798, if only as a specimen of naval literature. The following was the wording: 'Port of Hull. Britons, strike home! Revenge your Country's wrongs! Wanted, a number of brave fellows to serve for the Port of Hull in his Majesty's Royal Navy in defence of the British Constitution against French Perfidy. All hearts of oak who have ambition to distinguish themselves by stepping forward to chastise the insolence of their enemies, and to convince the world that Britannia Rules the Waves, have now an opportunity to receive a Bounty for magnitude unexampled in the annals of their Country. Each able-bodied seaman, including the King's bounty, seventeen pounds ten shillings, without any deduction whatever. Volunteers will be protected to their various vessels, and will be entitled, besides the bounty, to their share of the rich prizes which British valour shall capture from the French, whom

"We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again."

All true Britons are requested to

repair without delay to the Commissioner at the Rendezvous at Hull, where they will receive certificates to entitle them to the Bounty.'

This appeal to the patriotism of the Hull seamen, full as it was of the hearts-of-oak sentiment, and handsome as was the bounty that it was baited with, failed to attract the hardy fishermen to the Rendezvous in sufficient numbers, so the press-gang was set to work to supply the deficiency, with the result, sometimes, that the crews of the whalers overcame the men-of-war's men and maintained their liberty.

The carrying trade of Hull was prosecuted with great difficulty during these times; and had it not been that the shipowners formed themselves into an association for mutual protection and defence, sending out their ships in convoys, and adopting many secret methods of communication, the trade of Hull would have been temporarily suspended. The sailing fleets of Hull comprised, in the early part of the present century, many noble vessels, and voyages were made by them to all parts of the world. They went to the West Coast of Africa for guano, to China for tea, to Quebec for timber, to Norway for ice, to India for cotton, and to Australia and South Africa with emigrants. But the advent of steam wrought a revolution in Hull as well as elsewhere, and there came into the shipping competition a class of men with enlarged commercial views and unbounded enterprise, who established fleets of steamers between Hull and many of the principal ports of the world, conveying the manufactured goods and original products of this country to distant lands, and bringing back valuable cargoes, far more varied and rich than those with which the argosies of old were laden.

The first steamer that was sent forth from the port of Hull was the *Caledonian*, which was built in 1815, and plied between Hull and Thorne. A second steamer, the *Rockingham*, was soon afterwards added to this station. By 1820 there were several coasting steamers employed by the Hull shipowners, and a couple of fine vessels were put on to run between Hull and Hamburg, the first foreign port to which any Hull steamer was despatched. The *Monarch* and the *London* were on the Hamburg line; the *Prince Frederick* and the *Yorkshireman* made regular voyages between Hull and London, the average time of passage being thirty-two hours; the *Lowther* sailed between Selby, Hull, and Yarmouth, and a number of smaller craft, steam-tugs, were kept going between Hull, Selby, Goole, and *Gainsborough*.

The foreign trade has been rapidly developed during the last forty years, many eminent firms having been engaged in it. Messrs. Brownlow, Pearson, & Co., Messrs. Sanderson & Co., Messrs. Gee & Co., and Messrs W. & C. L. Ringrose were all sending steamers from Hull to foreign ports in the year 1840, Hamburg being the place with which the Humber seaport had the most frequent communication. Lines were also established to Antwerp, Rotterdam, Gothenburg, and St. Petersburg. In fact, by means of steam, Hull was placed in direct trade with all the countries of the earth, although then, as now, her chief business is with the German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, and Russian seaboard. In 1850 the number of steamers sailing from Hull was 34, of a total register of 7144 tons; besides which there was a fleet of 453 sailing vessels, with a tonnage

of 62,471 tons. The increase of Hull steamers since then has been something marvellous. On the 31st of December 1876, Hull had 196 steamers, of a total register of 128,633 tons, while the number of sailing ships had increased to 559, although the tonnage had fallen to 40,918 tons. The tonnage on which dues were received at Hull during the year 1880 was 2,346,788 tons, made up as follows: steam-ships, 1996; sailing vessels, 1302; foreign trade, 1,657,254 tons; coasting trade, 689,534 tons.

To one firm more than any other is due this remarkable expansion of the steamship trade of Hull during the last forty years. The firm in question is that of Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., whose fleet to-day is more than six times as extensive as all the combined steamer fleets of Hull thirty years ago. The growth of this firm's operations has been one of the most remarkable features in the modern shipping trade. The late Mr. Thomas Wilson was the original founder of the concern, and in partnership with Mr. Beckinton and Messrs. Hudson did much pioneering on behalf of the Hull steamer traffic some half a century ago, when the population of the port was not more than one third of what it is at the present time. The iron trade was one of the firm's specialties, their vessels sailing with the valuable metal to various continental ports. Before steamers were largely introduced, Messrs. Wilson, Hudson, & Co. had four sailing ships running between Hull and Gothenburg—the *Patriot*, the *Ivanhoe*, the *Wave*, and the *Susan*—and had vessels plying also to Dunkirk. When it became evident, however, that steam was to be the ruling power in the navigation

of the seas, Messrs. Wilson & Co. lost no time in availing themselves of its advantages. On the Gothenburg line they placed three paddle steamers to begin with—the *Superb*, the *Innisfail*, and the *St. George*—which proved so profitable that the firm speedily set themselves to the work of enlarging their steamer fleet. Mr. Beckinton and Mr. Hudson had now retired from the firm, and Mr. David Wilson had been made a partner. Thenceforward the style of the firm became Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., and no further alteration has been made therein. In or about 1850 the *Courier* and the Scandinavian steamers were built and added to the Swedish line. From that time to the present, we believe, Messrs. Wilson's vessels have been intrusted with the conveyance of the royal mails between Hull and Sweden. During the period of the Crimean war, some interruption naturally occurred to the running of steamers between English ports and Russia, and Messrs. Wilson, who had put on steamers between Hull, Stettin, St. Petersburg, and Riga but a short time previous to the commencement of hostilities, had to suspend operations in that part of the world for a while. They were strengthening their hold in other directions, however, and from year to year built fresh ships and opened up fresh routes with a rapidity that said much for their foresight and enterprise, while affording good testimony of the large increase of trade between England and other nations.

In the year 1867 the then senior partner, Mr. David Wilson, retired, since which time the present proprietors, Mr. Charles Wilson and Mr. Arthur Wilson, have had the entire control of the ever-extending affairs of this eminent shipping firm. Sometimes acci-

dent has led to a sudden development of a new route. For instance, during the Franco-German war the trade to the Prussian Baltic ports was suspended altogether, the harbours being closed, and it became necessary to seek some other inlet for English goods to that part of the Continent. Messrs. Wilson therefore, being prevented continuing to run their vessels to Stettin, resolved upon opening up an alternative route to Trieste. This led to the permanent adoption of the Trieste line of steamers, by means of which the traffic between Sicily and the Adriatic and Hull came to be fully established, no change being made on this line on the resumption of the Stettin trade. A line of steamers to Norway was shortly afterwards started, and some especially fine vessels were put on for regular communication with Constantinople and Odessa. Nor did the firm's efforts stop there. They subsequently established lines to Hull, Boston, and New York; and from Newcastle and London they regularly despatch steamers to Dantzic, Riga, Christiansand, Christiania, Bombay, Colombo, Madras, and Calcutta. They have likewise a line between Liverpool and St. Petersburg. In all, Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co. have fifty-four steamers engaged in the carrying trades, many of the vessels being of large size and fitted up in the most complete manner, being amongst the best-appointed vessels afloat. A strong accession to the Wilson fleet was gained a year or two ago by the purchase of the steamers and business of the old-established shipping firm of Brownlow, Marsdin, & Co. The vessels thus transferred were seven in number, and included the *Marsdin*, the *Tiger*, the *Panther*, the *Zebra*, and the *Falcon*, it being Messrs. Brown-

low, Marsdin, & Co's. rule to give their ships names from the zoological world, as it has been the rule with Messrs. Wilson to have names ending with the vowel 'o' for the most part.

The following is a list of the various steamers now owned by Messrs. Wilson, with their tonnage :

In the North Sea and Lower Baltic trades they have engaged the—

	TONS		TONS
Albano . . .	1100	Irwell . . .	900
Angelo . . .	1500	Panther . . .	1050
Cameo . . .	1280	Tiger . . .	850
Domino . . .	750	Flamingo . . .	850
Hero . . .	850	Kelso . . .	1350
Orlando . . .	1500	Leo . . .	1350
Rolle . . .	1500	Milo . . .	1180
Romeo . . .	1750	Nero . . .	1350
Tasso . . .	450	Otto . . .	1150
Bravo . . .	1180	Pacific . . .	850
Cato . . .	1250	Zebra . . .	640
Fido . . .	1250	Falcon . . .	480
Gozo . . .	1280	Argo . . .	750
Humber . . .	750		

In the Upper Baltic, Mediterranean, Adriatic, Black Sea, and Indian trades, the undermentioned eighteen steamers are employed :

	TONS		TONS
Apollo . . .	1750	Thomas Wil-	
Calypso . . .	1750	son . . .	2000
Como . . .	2000	Virago . . .	2400
Dido . . .	1700	Xantho . . .	2400
Erato . . .	2000	Yeddo . . .	2400
Hidalgo . . .	2000	Marsdin . . .	1875
Palermo . . .	2100	Silvio . . .	1700
Quito . . .	2000	Gitano . . .	1780
Rinaldo . . .	2200	Borodino . . .	1870
Sappho . . .	1550		

And in the American trades the following splendid steamers are kept constantly crossing and recrossing the Atlantic :

	TONS		TONS
Othello . . .	3000	Lepanto . . .	3000
Otranto . . .	3000	Rialto . . .	2900
Sorrento . . .	2900	Bassano . . .	2400
Salerno . . .	2800	Romano . . .	3800
Marengo . . .	2900		

The frequency with which one or the other of this magnificent fleet of fifty-four ocean steamers passes from the Humber will be best indicated by a reference to the various lines and their regu-

lations as to sailing. From Hull to Hamburg, and *vice versa*, Messrs. Wilson despatch steamers every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday ; from Hull to Antwerp every Wednesday and Saturday ; and from Hull to Dunkirk every Wednesday. The three fine steamers, the Rollo, the Romeo, and the Orlando, are devoted exclusively to the Gothenburg traffic, and carry the royal Swedish mails, the voyage being made once a week, one vessel leaving Hull at half-past four every Saturday morning, and another taking its departure from Gothenburg every Friday. From Hull to Christiansand and Christiania trips are also made once a week, the Angelo and the Hero being engaged in this traffic. The line to Stavanger and Bergen is maintained by the Domino, which leaves Hull every alternate Thursday. The Tasso performs the voyage between Hull and Drontheim at the like intervals. From Hull to Stettin steamers depart every Wednesday and Saturday during the entire season open to navigation, making calls at Copenhagen. Then there are vessels to Danzig and Riga weekly, as well as from Hull to Cronstadt and St. Petersburg. For Constantinople and Odessa the departures are necessarily less frequent, a steamer being despatched to those ports about once every three weeks. Steamers are sent to the Mediterranean and Adriatic ports frequently also, Naples, Palermo, Messina, Catania, Trieste, Venice, Fiume, and Bari being the ports generally proceeded to in these voyages, although, when inducement offers, the route is extended to other ports of Italy, Sicily, and Spain. Messrs. Wilson's Atlantic steamers sail from Hull to New York every week, calling at Boston when required.

From Newcastle the firm despatch vessels weekly to Stettin and to Riga; and from London have regular communication with Christiansand and Christiania, Riga, Libau, &c. Occasional voyages are also made by Messrs. Wilson's steamers between England and India. Indeed, the Humber fleet is known all over the world, and the commerce of this country has been greatly assisted by the rapid and effective intercourse which Messrs. Wilson have for so many years maintained with this country and the important foreign ports to which they trade. Their captains include some of the best-known men who have sailed from Hull during the present generation. Amongst them may be mentioned such able veterans of the ocean as Soul-by, Abbott, Dossor, Langlands, Johnson, Watson, Roach, Mills, Todd, Owen, Newman, &c.—names which will call up interesting recollections in the minds of those who are accustomed to sail the northern seas. The Wilsons have always recognised the importance of efficient service, and in the equipment of their vessels and the appointing of experienced and capable men as commanding spirits have done much to insure the great success which has attended their undertakings.

A glance at the offices of the firm and their surroundings affords one a pretty correct inkling of the vast operations in which Messrs. Thomas Wilson & Sons are engaged. The offices are situated at the corner of Kingston-street and Commercial-road, Hull, in convenient proximity to the Albert Railway and Humber Docks. Very palatial and commanding are these same offices, forming altogether perhaps the largest and most suitably-arranged steam-

shipping offices in the United Kingdom. The general office is an exceedingly large and lofty room, containing eight separate departments for export and two for import business, with accommodation for the Marine Superintendent and his assistants, and the passenger insurance and postal departments. Separate rooms are provided for the head officials, and private rooms for the managers and principals. There is likewise a commodious dining-room, with housekeeper's apartments, kitchen, clerks' tea-room, and store-rooms in close contiguity; while adjoining the building are stabling, coach-house, &c., together with large stores and offices for the storekeeper and his assistants.

There is much evidence of the outer world in and around these offices—pictures of steamers in full sail, with wind and tide very much in their favour; eye-catching announcements of ship-departures, in which far-off countries and ports are forcibly suggested to the mind; glimpses of ancient mariners, customs officers, people waiting for ships to arrive, people waiting for ships to sail, porters hurrying hither and thither with gigantic burdens; and, above all, the sense and scent of the salt brine come in with the breeze, and one's heart is set longing for a trip upon the ocean. Tall masts are glistening in the sun, nodding their heads in response to the undulations of the waves, and here and there in the distance rises a column of smoke, indicating the setting forth of some huge steamer that has been charged to the full with heavy freight. Only a few weeks ago a crowd of loungers gathered in the region of the docks to witness a trial-trip, which was being made down the Humber by the latest addition to the Wilson line of steamers. The



new vessel was the *Romeo*, which had been built by Earle's Ship-building and Engineering Company for Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., to meet the increasing requirements of the trade between Hull and Gothenburg. The new steamer, indeed, has some claim to the regard of the people of Hull; for it is the latest sign they have had afforded to them of the fact that the shipping trade of the port is increasing, and that their chief firm of shipowners are determined to keep abreast with the times in the adoption of all modern improvements. The *Romeo* will be the fastest steamer sailing from Hull. She has a length of 275 feet between perpendiculars, a breadth of beam of 34 feet 6 inches, and a depth of hold of 20 feet. The vessel is of exceptionally strong build, having six water-tight compartments and an iron upper deck, sheathed with wood. 'She is rigged as a three-masted fore and aft schooner,' says an authority, 'with iron pole masts, and she looks exceedingly well upon the water. Her deck-houses amidships being of varnished teak, with a teak rail all round her poop, she presents a very handsome appearance on deck. All that steam can be made to do on board ship has been accomplished on board the *Romeo*, from setting the sails to steering the vessel and heaving up the anchor.' The accommodation for the yearly increasing number of passengers by this route is of a high-class description, and will compare favourably with that provided on the great Atlantic steamers. The entire breadth of the steamer in her widest part is taken up with the saloon, which is fitted in a most elegant and comfortable manner, with sofas upholstered in green velvet. The woodwork

is a combination of mahogany, satin-wood, and maple, all finished in the highest style of ship decoration. Between decks a large space has been set apart for the accommodation of emigrants, provision being made for about 1000. A considerable number of emigrants leave Gothenburg every year for western lands, going by way of Hull. The entire vessel is lighted with gas—saloons, cabins, engine-rooms, and 'tween decks. Most of the steamers put to sea by Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., during the last few years, have been built by Earle's Ship-building and Engineering Company, who have earned a great reputation among English shipbuilders, having launched many notable vessels at one time and another, including ships of war for the British and other Governments, steam-yachts for the present Czar, and large passenger ships for the Atlantic lines.

It says much for the energy and enterprise of the present proprietors of the leading firm of Hull shipowners that they have been able to work their business into the proud position of being the largest private shipowning concern in the world, the one or two firms which equalled them in extent of business having been converted into limited liability companies during the last year or two. Mr. Charles Henry Wilson, the senior partner, has represented Hull in Parliament since the general election of 1874. In the public affairs of the port he has always evinced a warm interest. In 1870 he served the office of Sheriff of Hull. He is a magistrate for the East Riding of Yorkshire, a director of the Hull Dock Company, and of the North-Eastern Railway Company; he is also chairman of the Hull Orphan Asylum, and both he and

his brother are liberal supporters of the local charities and institutions. In 1878 Mr. C. H. Wilson became the owner of Warter Priory, which he purchased from Lord Muncaster. This charming property comprises, in addition to the noble mansion, an estate of 8400 acres, including some of the loveliest scenery in Yorkshire. In commercial and shipping matters, Mr. C. H. Wilson is considered a high authority in the House of Commons, and in the work of committees he frequently renders valuable assistance in forwarding practical legislation. He is greatly respected in the shipping world as a man of shrewd common-sense views; his espousal of any movement being considered an assurance of its success.

Mr. Arthur Wilson, the younger partner, resides at Tranby Croft, and not only is he known for his sterling business qualities, but in the capacity of county gentleman fills a post of honour and responsibility. He is an earnest patron of the sports of the field, and is the present Master of the Holderness Hounds. Referring to Mr. Arthur Wilson's acceptance of this office, so important from a sportsman's point of view, a writer in *The County Gentleman* recently said: 'No day is too rough, no distance too far, to stop his going out; no time in the afternoon too late, so long as there is light for this truly keen sportsman to draw; and Mr. Wilson's sole endeavour is to show sport and get his hounds well away, an endeavour in which he is well supported by a keen but thoroughly sportsmanlike field. A genial, kind-hearted, and unselfish man, unsparing of himself, his horses, or his hounds.'

Fortunate has it been for Hull that two such able, public-spirited gentlemen as Messrs. C. H. &

Arthur Wilson have, during the last few years, had the management of the leading shipping house of the port; and when the town obtains the additional railway facilities that will result from the opening up of the projected Hull and Barnsley Railway, a further impetus will be given to the shipping trade of the Humber. Hull has been somewhat at a disadvantage hitherto in regard to its railway communication, some of the chief centres of industry in the North having been very inconveniently placed in regard to direct transit to and from the port. The Wilsons have, however, raised their fleet of steamers to such a high standard of efficiency, and have so thoroughly adapted themselves to the progress and demands of the time, that they may be said to have prepared the way very completely for any future development of trade that Hull may experience.

The Hull shipping trade has, despite the general advancement which has been made, undergone not a few vicissitudes; and some firms of note have disappeared from contemporary shipping annals altogether. Messrs. Brownlow, Marsdin, & Co., as we have seen, sold their ships to Messrs. Wilson, after having been prominently connected with the port for sixty years or more, in one way and another. Another name ought also to be mentioned in connection with this, that of Mr. Zachariah C. Pearson, formerly Mayor of the town. Mr. Pearson, it seems, was the owner of one or two steamers which he kept employed in various ways at a good profit, running to no particular ports, but adapting themselves to anything that might turn up. In an evil hour, however, Mr. Pearson got into the toils of Messrs.

Overend, Gurney, & Co. He was persuaded to purchase a fleet of six steamers from the Greek and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, Messrs. Overend, Gurney, & Co. taking Mr. Pearson's acceptances for the entire purchase money. - 'Here he (Mr. Pearson) was,' writes Mr. S. Xenos, in that book of his in which he so fully exposed the iniquities of the Overend, Gurney, & Co. management, 'at the head of an armada far larger than he could find work for, pay, or manage. And the advice on which these changes were made was given for the sake of securing a few thousand pounds' commission. It was not long before Mr. Pearson saw his real position. He determined upon a *coup de main* that would at once seal his fate. The American war was at its height; he resolved to run the blockade of the southern ports. It was a mad project. Some of the vessels were too small

to cross the Atlantic; others were of too mediocre steam-power; and some others, when loaded, drew more than seventeen feet of water. Some of the vessels were stranded, others were captured, and poor Pearson—driven to bankruptcy—was stripped of his last penny by his pretended benefactors.'

Since those days we have settled upon a period of greater commercial calm, and Hull has known less of the fever and the fret of undertakings of mere adventure. The steady growth of a business like that of Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co. is one of the best evidences of trade stability that the 'Third Port' can possess.

We have to acknowledge our obligations to a little work, entitled *Hull, and its Ships and Shipowners*, reprinted from the *Eastern Morning News*, for many of the particulars here given of the past history of the port and its shipping trade.

## FRIENDS:

*A Duet in a Minor Key.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'RUBY: A WATER-COLOUR SKETCH.'

'Acting the law we live by without fear,  
And because right is right, to do the right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'—TENNYSON.

---

### I.

WILD-FLOWERS everywhere as far as the eye could reach. That was not any great distance, certainly; for the scene was a wooded dingle, and was bounded on all sides by slopes thickly set with trees and the tangled undergrowth which flourishes so luxuriantly in the shade. And all up the sides of the banks, all among the twisted moss-covered tree-roots, all along the brink of the brooklet which flowed at the bottom of the dingle, there were wild-flowers—wide patches of sweet violets, white and blue; large bunches of primroses, high upon their stalks; beds of wild anemone, its white stars scattered profusely amid lichened sticks and sprouting ferns, and last year's dry and decaying leaves. The sunshine streaming through the branches suggested glorious weather outside the shady wood, and the notes of blackbirds and finches sounded among the fresh young leaves as they only do in May. The whole scene was fraught with poetic beauty, and was exquisitely complete.

So thought Mabel Carr as she sat with her sketchbook thrown on one side, and her chin propped up on her hand. Lovely in all their harmony of contrast as were the flowers, they were such things as dreams are made of rather than water-colour drawings. She gave

one contemptuous glance at her half-finished, hopelessly inadequate sketch; then, fixing her eyes on the beautiful original, she let her thoughts wander whither they would.

An artist, longing for some touch of life to vivify the scene, would probably have said that amid so much that was fair, there was naught fairer than Mabel Carr herself. And yet, when I have told you that her eyes were of the same deep blue as the violets at her feet, and that her hair was of that shade with which the mediæval painters loved to depict the flowing locks of their angels, I know I have not made you understand in the least how beautiful Mabel really was. There was something more to notice in her face than its mere beauty. There was much sweetness in it, and some power; while you looked you felt you loved it, and when you were parted from it you dwelt lovingly on the recollection it left behind. It would strike you sometimes as realising your conception of a perfect angel-face; sometimes it would appeal to you with all the winsome artlessness that makes a child's features fair, while child-face and angel-face alike were ever pervaded with an expression of the most genuine womanliness.

Mabel remained so still that the little woodland creatures, tak-

ing heart of grace, passed her by with no more fear than if, as she sat there in her white spring dress, she had been a statue hewn in marble. Squirrels, rabbits, robins, climbed and ran and hopped in complete unconcern; the dingle was their domain, and, so far as they could see, they had no cause for alarm on the score of dispossession.

Suddenly, however, there came a change. A footfall, no matter how light, might forbode some hitherto unsuspected danger—a moving human figure, though only that of a woman, had better be avoided. There was a rush, a scuffle, a flutter, and all the happy frisking animals were out of sight. Only Mabel Carr sat still, heedless of the approaching step, hardly less so when a soft hand was laid upon her shoulder.

‘Ah, it’s you!’ she said, without looking round or changing her attitude; and the tone in which she spoke was expressive of placid content, as if her companion’s presence was just what she had been expecting—was just what she needed to complete the pleasure of the moment.

There was in the aspect of the new-comer more of gravity than seemed quite in keeping with the gay brilliancy of the surrounding scene; this, however, was mainly attributable to the fact that she was dressed in mourning. Her face, though neither so beautiful nor so winning as that of Mabel Carr, was perhaps more striking. Its essential characteristic was strength. There was such power of purpose expressed in the finely-moulded mouth and chin; such a great calm in the dark eyes, as if they saw so far, and judged so tenderly, and were so full of love and truth and pity. As she stood behind Mabel, her darker colouring, her sombre dress, the more

settled expression of her countenance, might have suggested a shade to the picture of which Mabel was the light; but it was a pleasant reposeful shade. She was older than Mabel by some five or six years, and she had thought out her conclusions deeper under the guidance of a longer experience.

They were not sisters these two, and Victoria Lacy was a widow. She had been married when quite young, less from any strong attachment than from a sense of duty, and because others had told her it would be well for her to marry. Her short married life had not been at all unhappy; and yet, when she recovered from the first shock of her husband’s sudden death, she was able to accept her widowhood with no sense of an overwhelming anguish. Her life, however, was lonely, more particularly as her husband’s relations were not congenial to her, and she had none of her own to whom she could turn in her solitude. Then she came across Mabel Carr, and they formed a mutual friendship, as women *can* and *do* in spite of the incredulity sometimes expressed to the contrary. Mabel was an orphan; she was of an age to act as she pleased; she had a sufficiently strong will to know what and whom she liked, and she possessed a fortune of her own large enough to make her independent. Therefore when the proposal came from Victoria that they—each loving the other, and both lonely—should make their home together, Mabel accepted it with joy; her admiration for her friend and her belief in her were boundless. The bargain was struck, and neither had ever had any cause to repent it.

‘I came to see how you are getting on,’ said Victoria, picking up the despised sketch.

'I'm afraid I've sadly wasted my time,' said Mabel. 'I've done but a poor morning's work, as you may see, in spite of every advantage.'

'I don't know, Mab; I suspect the time has been less wasted than you think. These kind of mornings seem to say to me: Do nothing; be placidly happy; exist simply, and dream. Don't you think so?'

Victoria moved round a little and seated herself on a fallen trunk, whence she had a view of Mabel's face. Mabel did not answer. If she had been dreaming before, her friend's presence did not seem wholly to dispel the dream. Thus they both sat silent awhile, soothed by the buzzing of the insects and the singing of the birds. At length, however, Mabel roused herself.

'Are we going to sit here all day?' she asked, with a lazy smile.

'I shouldn't mind,' was the answer; 'it is so warm and delicious, and all so pretty to look at. Do you know, I was just thinking that if ever you have your picture painted—which you promised me long ago, remember—you ought to be taken just as you are, here among the wild-flowers, white frock, straw hat and all—a veritable Queen Mab in your own kingdom.'

'And do you know what I was thinking?' said Mabel. 'That this is the month of May, and the London season is in full swing, and that, although it is very beautiful here, I honestly prefer London at this time of the year. Very prosaic thoughts, weren't they, compared with yours?'

A momentary expression of self-reproach crossed Victoria Lacy's brow. It must have struck her that with so fair a face Mabel had a claim to find her kingdom elsewhere than amid the woodland flowers. Then she said:

'You are right, dear, and I wish with all my heart it could be managed; but—' She paused, and Mabel said quickly,

'But you don't see the fun of it yourself quite so much as you used; otherwise, my sweet, the thing could be managed at once.'

'Not exactly, Mab,' said the other gently and in perfect good-humour. 'I don't like having to shut myself up when I might be seeing my friends.'

'Well, but now look here,' said Mabel, with the air of one propounding an incontrovertible argument. 'You, who are generally so reasonable, and have such a contempt for doing things to the letter, why are you so inconsistent? You didn't care for your mother-in-law, you know you didn't; so why should you go through the affection of pretending to mourn?'

'That is quite true,' replied Victoria. 'I was not fond of her; she was not particularly kind to me, and she was not, I think, a woman whom it was easy for any one to love; but I have the greatest respect for my two sisters-in-law, and I wouldn't for the world do anything which might be misconstrued by them as unbecoming or unfeeling, or as wanting in a proper respect.'

Mabel shrugged her shoulders and made an expressive little motion with her lips.

'Of course,' she said, 'I know that when once you take a thing seriously into your head, it's not the least use trying to make you change. But *couldn't* we go, if only for a week or two—quite in a quiet way, you know—just to see the pictures and to hear the opera, if for nothing else?'

'It *is* hard upon you, Mab,' said Victoria, as she parted the golden threads on the girl's forehead. 'We'll see if some arrangement can be made. With all



your many friends it surely can't be very difficult to manage.'

'O, I don't want to go without you!' said Mabel, jumping up quickly. 'You needn't think I'm so selfish as all that! If you are bound to stay here, of course I don't want to make it harder for you than it is.'

And she turned up the pathway that led out of the wood. There was a sharpness in her tone which told that her feelings—and perhaps her temper too—were just a little ruffled. Mabel was sensitive, especially on the score of being rightly understood and fairly appreciated; and she was also rather irritable, as highly-sensitive people generally are. Victoria made no reply, but followed her till the pathway widened; then coming up alongside of Mabel she quietly took her arm, and thus they walked on a little way in silence. Suddenly Mabel said,

'Have you any real belief in women's friendships?'

'I have, indeed,' Victoria replied, with calm emphasis. She felt that they understood each other so completely that they could venture on such a subject without any fear that the discussion need necessarily imply any slight upon their mutual friendship. 'I believe the capacity for friendship to be as strong in a woman as in a man, and I think it is a cruel thing to try and sneer a woman out of this belief as some people do. For just think: if a woman cannot enjoy the close friendship of a woman as a man does with a man, she is deprived altogether of one of the sweetest pleasures, one of the completest consolations in life.'

'But don't you think we women are more jealous of each other?' said Mabel naïvely.

'Ah,' replied Victoria, 'under certain circumstances many a woman's friendship does end in bitter quarrel, I know; but given corresponding circumstances, would many a man's friendship stand the test better? I doubt it.'

'How far do you think friendship would carry one?' asked Mabel, in a tone between jest and earnest. 'What would you do for me, dearie? Would you die for me?'

'I hope so, Mab, if it had to come to that,' was the answer, with a smile.

'Well, it isn't very likely to come to that, fortunately, in these days, is it? What else would you do for me, more within the bounds of possibility?'

'Ah, it is so easy to say till one is tried,' replied Victoria; 'but I think, my darling—nay, I am sure—I would live for you.'

Did it strike Victoria Lacy at that moment that to live for those we love may sometimes be even a harder trial than to lay down life for their sake?

## II.

WHETHER Victoria Lacy really took any steps towards procuring for Mabel the wished-for visit to London, or whether circumstances shaped themselves from without independently of any coöperation from within, it needs not to relate in detail here. One thing, however, is certain. Not many days after that bright spring morning so pleasantly spent in the woods, Mabel received from some cousins in London an invitation to pay them a visit of a few weeks, if Mrs. Lacy would consent to be parted from her for so long.

Something in the tone of this invitation, which, while it distinctly excluded Victoria, seemed to imply that Mabel's natural place

should be among those of her own blood, jarred upon the girl, and her first impulse was to decline it.

Every one knew that where the one went, the other went too; her cousins ought at least to have had the civility to ask Victoria; if they didn't choose to notice her friend she was quite sure she didn't wish them to notice *her*, and above all she couldn't think of leaving Victoria to mope by herself in the country. All of which was not in the least affection on her part. Her frame of mind was perfectly genuine at the moment, only it was capable of modification under a slight pressure of persuasion, which Victoria Lacy understood how to apply.

So the upshot of it all was that Mabel accepted her cousins' invitation; and by the time the day of her departure arrived, her view of the whole matter had so far undergone a change that she could look upon herself as almost more to be pitied than Victoria, in that the latter could take their separation with such apparent indifference. Her very last words as they parted were,

'Good-bye, you dear thing! I wish you were coming to help me to enjoy it! I know I sha'n't half care for it without you; and as for *you*, I don't believe you'll miss me one bit!'

'She is so selfish,' some one once said, in accusation of Mabel Carr. To which Victoria had replied, with the calm decisiveness of manner that no one ever dreamt of contradicting,

'No; she has naturally very warm feelings, and she expects a great deal from those she loves. But she is not selfish; no, not in the very least.'

So she smiled away any momentary annoyance at those parting words. Yet I think she

must have experienced something of sadness, too, as she realised how seldom is any sacrifice or any trial—great or small—appreciated at its full value. For no one enjoyed society more than she, no one liked seclusion less; and she had accepted it in this instance solely out of consideration for what was due to others; while she had let Mabel go with no lamentations, not because she should not feel her absence acutely, but because she was determined to utter no word which could prompt Mabel to reverse her decision and forego her amusement. And Mabel's last words had been genuinely expressive of her feelings. Her pleasure in her visit to London was only half-hearted. Her admiration for Victoria, her love for her, her sympathy with her, made it impossible for Mabel to believe that she could extract the fullest satisfaction out of any enjoyment which her friend did not share. At the same time her own intense desire to be as fully appreciated in return made her overlook the true motive of her friend's conduct. The thought uppermost in her mind was, not that Victoria was cheerfully and uncomplainingly accepting solitude in the country so as to make her the freer to go, but that she seemed able to part from her with apparently so little regret; and faulty though the feeling might be in the abstract, it yet grew out of some of the best impulses of her nature.

Yet perhaps if it sometimes be a pity that we inadequately appreciate the motives which prompt others to act by us as they do, it is also frequently well that these motives should be but partially revealed. Mabel, as she sat in the train, and meditated on her visit to her cousins, was naturally led into the reflection that it was

very kind of them to think of her, and it could have done her no sort of good to have been informed that the invitation had been given mainly on interested grounds.

The Lefroys' home was in London. They had a comfortable house and a numerous acquaintance, but they lived well up to their income, principally derived from a government appointment occupied by Mr. Lefroy, and with a family of four sons and one daughter there was not much to look to as a provision for the future. Three of the sons were doing well in different professions in various parts of the world; but Hubert, the youngest—one of those attractive, popular, clever creatures, who might do anything and invariably do nothing—was his mother's darling, and Hubert must marry a woman with money.

'Of course I wouldn't ask *any* one,' said Mrs. Lefroy to her husband; 'but Mabel—a cousin and all—it's so perfectly natural to have her as a companion for Gertrude; and she has a very comfortable fortune! I really consider it *quite* providential that Mrs. Lacy should be in mourning this year. Of course if she had not been, they would have come to town together; for she has got Mabel *completely* under her finger and thumb, and Mabel is positively silly about her. Those kind of infatuations are much better broken through as soon as possible; and, anyhow, it is an opportunity not to be lost.'

It is not always that a mother's arrangements with reference to her son's matrimonial future find favour in his eyes; but in this case, Mrs. Lefroy being cautious enough to keep her designs to herself, matters took their own course. Had Mabel's attractions rested solely on her fortune, the business might have been harder

to manage. Hubert Lefroy, younger son though he was, and with nothing but a slender portion to look to, was nevertheless not at all inclined to give mere money the foremost place in his calculations. His cousin Mabel, however, whom he had not seen since they were both children, had that about her which appealed to him far more strongly than if she had possessed a hundred thousand pounds. With her deep-blue eyes, and her sweet mobile expression, and her halo of golden hair, 'What can a man want more,' thought Hubert, 'to live with and look at day after day? This is the woman for me to marry,' was the decision he arrived at almost as soon as he saw her. So he fell in love with her at first sight.

Perhaps hardly any man, having singled out a woman as the peculiar object of his love, is acutely troubled by the thought of any insuperable difficulty in the way of his winning her. Certainly the circumstances and the surroundings of Hubert Lefroy's existence had not been of a kind to place any such reflection prominently before him. He was accustomed to be appreciated, beloved, believed in; and, though too manly to be actually conceited, he could hardly help being conscious in a careless kind of way that there was much about him that was attractive, and that set him in agreeable contrast to many of his social equals. Perhaps he was too much inclined to accept what was given him as no more than his due—or, at least, as a matter of course—but even this he did with a naïve absence of all self-consciousness that possessed its own peculiar charm. He was one of those men who are attractive to persons of all ages, and to men and women alike.

His countenance, especially when he smiled, was singularly pleasing, and was in itself sufficient to win the hearts of some; others were captivated by his manners; while for those who sought something deeper, something more permanent, there was plenty of keen intelligence and playful humour, with a capacity, too, for calm and concentrated thought. Only a close student of human nature would have detected that Hubert Lefroy was deficient in that kind of strength which is implied by constancy and consistent conduct.

Mabel Carr, however, possessed no subtle perceptions of this sort. She was open to the full impression of that concentrated effort to please her alone with which he appealed to her heart. She was fascinated by his mere smile, so tender and so sympathetic; while she could appreciate his devotion all the more that she could recognise in him one who, of a refined and educated mind, had thought much for himself, and had the faculty of commanding attention from others. And there was nothing about him, either in his behaviour towards herself or towards other people, to raise a suspicion of any weakness in her hero; nor, with so much that was excellent and attractive laid at her feet, was it indeed likely that Mabel would be quick to detect such flaws as there were in his character. Some people said he was indolent. Perhaps he might be; but that was merely, she thought, because he had not yet found the special work for which he was best fitted. Others accused him of selfishness. Yet if he had a slight tendency to think that the world had been created for him alone, was it not mainly attributable to the eagerness with which his parents and

his sister anticipated all his wishes, and smoothed all unpleasantness out of his path? He had a calm happy temper; his father never grumbled at him, his mother was devoted to him, his sister worshipped him.

'If he is not perfection,' thought Mabel, 'he is as near it as I am ever likely to find.'

And then it was so sweet to think that all this perfection was being dedicated to her, and to her alone.

Thus, by the time her visit had lasted a fortnight, Mabel Carr and Hubert Lefroy were as much in love with one another as even Mrs. Lefroy herself could have wished.

---

### III.

THE violets had been in bloom when Mabel left the country; it was the time of roses when she returned. She had parted from her friend with a promise to write frequently, and during the first week of her absence the promise was faithfully kept. Then came days of silence, followed at intervals by little notes scribbled in great haste, with the assurance of a long letter next day, which often never came. Meanwhile the fortnight extended to a month, and the month was fast becoming six weeks, ere Mabel suggested returning home. Victoria Lacy, however, was not hurt by what might have seemed at first sight indifference or neglect. That Mabel seemed so willing to prolong her visit was at least a sign that she was enjoying herself; so when the little hasty notes of apology arrived, Victoria read between the lines, understanding that Mabel had something better and pleasanter to do than to write letters—even to her—and waited

patiently for the announcement she felt sure would come sooner or later.

And when at last Mabel wrote to say that her visit to her cousins had culminated in her engagement to Hubert Lefroy, Victoria Lacy was not taken by surprise. She had dwelt so long on the possibility that she could accept the actual fact with calmness. True, she sighed over the thought of their companionship being broken up, over the prospect of her own return to solitude; and she wondered wistfully whether the step would be for Mabel's happiness, and whether Hubert Lefroy were worthy of her. Victoria's own life had hitherto been more or less generally coloured with neutral tint, so to speak. She had never experienced any of those intense joys or those bitter woes which give to human existence its highest lights and its deepest shadows; and therefore, though she could take Mabel's exceeding joy upon trust, still she trembled a little for her friend out of sheer inexperience concerning the human capacity for great happiness.

Then she sat down and wrote a little note of love and sympathy that was more precious to Mabel than all the congratulations with which she was daily overwhelmed.

'I have never seen Mr. Lefroy myself,' so ran the note; 'but if all the accounts I hear of him speak true, I think I would sooner trust my Queen Mab to him than to any one else.'

I am not sure if the sweetest part of all those happy days for Mabel did not lie in the long talks between her and Victoria through the summer hours—among the roses and the honeysuckles when the morning air was warm and soft and still; or

in the evening light by the open window when the wood-pigeon's note sounded from the neighbouring trees—talks which were all of Hubert, how good, how clever, how popular he was, and how happy *she* was in her newly-found bliss! The theme never seemed to fail, never to lose its interest; and then it was so pleasant to have a listener who could put herself entirely in the background without any jealous pang to mar the full effect of her sympathy. This was the heyday of Mabel's young existence, the holiday time of her life. Victoria supposed that her own holiday time was past. Such as it had been she had enjoyed it in a way; yet it had been somewhat of a failure, and had left behind it a vague feeling of disappointment. That was no reason, however, why she should attempt to cool Mabel's intense enjoyment.

And it did not occur to Mabel *now* to dwell exactly on the apparent indifference with which her friend could contemplate their coming separation. She had found something which, for the time at least, had power to fill her whole existence, and to satisfy the demands of her heart more completely than any friendship.

'Well but, Mab, having heard so much of Hubert Lefroy, when am I to see him? I'm naturally dying to see any one so charming, let alone being eager to welcome him for your sake, dear.'

This was how the daily conversation always ended; but for a while no practicable opening presented itself to Mabel for introducing her lover to her friend. At length, however, matters arranged themselves. The wedding was not to take place till the autumn, and in the mean while Mrs. Lefroy, partly to gratify her son and partly from a sense of

expediency in keeping the young people together, settled to spend the intervening months at a pretty little place that was to be let for the summer, and which was hardly two miles distant from the home of Mabel Carr and Victoria Lacy.

Hubert Lefroy had formed a distinct conception of Mrs. Lacy long before he ever saw her, and, as is usual with such preconceptions, it was sufficiently wide of the mark; for the data on which it was based were the antagonistic descriptions of her which he received from Mrs. Lefroy on the one hand, and from Mabel on the other. The impression conveyed to him through the medium of his mother's somewhat unreasonable antipathy to Victoria was, that Mrs. Lacy must be a woman possessed with a passion for dominating, who had established an influence over Mabel by a system of flattery and by certain attractions of face and manner, which, however, he was sure, would never be likely to appeal to *him*. Nor was this impression in the least altered by Mabel's enthusiasm in her friend's favour. For it was perfectly natural that Mabel's lover should feel but little interest in her affections other than as they concerned himself, and should be inclined to look upon her friendship as a somewhat fantastic infatuation.

The Lefroys were no sooner established in their summer home than Mrs. Lefroy and Mrs. Lacy went through the form of exchanging visits, which, however, did not result in the introduction of the latter to the bridegroom elect. Whether by accident or by design, Hubert was a week in the country before Mabel was able to arrange a meeting between him and her friend. And then, by one of those turns of circumstance on which the whole fate of a life will

sometimes hang, their first meeting was, after all, accidental and informal.

Hubert Lefroy, having accepted an invitation to luncheon, made two mistakes: he forgot the exact time for which he had been asked, and so arrived half an hour too soon; and he lost his way, thereby finding himself at last in a rose-garden before an open window, instead of on the door-step correctly ringing the bell.

Somehow, when he got as far as the open window, though he hardly ventured to enter the house that way, he did not feel inclined to turn and go round to the front door. By the window was a high Japanese screen, all red and gold and grotesque figures, and on the other side of the screen a lady was sitting at the piano, and singing with all the pathos of a rich and sympathetic voice. It was not Mabel's voice, he knew, yet it had the power to keep him listening there—how long he was never quite certain; but it was long enough for him to notice, with a distinctness so that he never again forgot, the flowers by the window, the painted tiles in the flower-pot, the pattern of the carpet, the texture of the curtains. For there are moments in a lifetime when such things impress themselves upon the mind, all unconsciously it may be, yet with a marvellous swiftness and intensity.

But the music ceased; a little blue Skye terrier crawled out from under the curtains making a demonstrative commotion, and Hubert Lefroy found himself face to face with a lady, tall, graceful, dressed in black, whose face struck him at once less by its beauty than by its compelling interest. His first thought was an admission that if this was Mabel's friend she had some grounds for her



enthusiasm ; his next was one of annoyance with himself, primarily, for the admission ; secondarily, because what *was* there really in Mrs. Lacy's appearance to make him so inconsequentially reverse his preconception of her ? Victoria was the first to speak.

'Ah, Mr. Lefroy !' she said, forestalling his apologies, 'we have cheated Mab out of her formal introduction ; it is so much pleasanter to meet like friends than like strangers, isn't it ? And we are friends already, I hope ?'

'I hope so,' he replied rather gravely, as he took the hand which she extended. 'I am very sorry to disturb you in this way, but I mistook the turning, and, having come in by the garden-door, I didn't know how to get round.'

'It was a very happy mistake,' she replied, smiling ; 'you have seen Mab's home for the first time on its brightest and prettiest side, and that is as it should be.'

He liked her for the way in which she at once identified him with Mabel. He sat down opposite to her, between the Japanese screen and the window, just in the warmest patch of sunlight, and felt already as if he had known her for years. Mabel, wandering over the grass, among the rose-bushes and the beds of yellow nasturtium and purple clematis, found them sitting so.

'O you cunning creatures !' she exclaimed, stopping before them in the narrow gravel pathway ; 'so you've managed to get over your first impressions without me by to notice !'

Then, stepping in through the open window and laying a hand on the shoulder of each, she said, with one of those smiles that made her face so intensely lovable, 'And I hope neither of you ever means to be the least bit jealous of the other.'

## IV.

MABEL CARR and Hubert Lefroy were sitting together on the lawn, under the shade of a walnut-tree, one hazy hot afternoon some six weeks later on in the summer. They were occupying two easy garden-chairs, and a third had just been vacated by Victoria Lacy. She had been reading aloud, while Mabel worked and Hubert basked lazily in the sunshine, snipping up grass-blades with a pair of scissors ; but somewhat abruptly she had closed the book, and with a sudden excuse had gone away into the house. When she was out of earshot, Mabel said :

'Now, Hubert, won't you confess at last that she is quite as nice as I have always maintained she is ?'

Mabel was busy sorting out different shades of her silks, and she did not look up as she spoke, otherwise she might have noticed a peculiar light in Hubert's eyes as he gazed after Mrs. Lacy's retreating figure. She had to repeat her question, however, before he answered it, and then he said :

'She is quite, *quite* different from what I fancied her to be before I knew her.'

'And doesn't she read charmingly ?' continued Mabel. 'It really is a pleasure to listen to her.'

'She does everything well,' he exclaimed warmly ; 'she is—a—a wonderful woman !'

Mabel laughed out merrily.

'Well, you've come round, certainly,' she said ; 'and I'm glad you have, for I wanted you to appreciate my best and dearest friend, Hubert. But I knew you would when you came to know her—everybody likes her !'

He did not make any further reply. He took up the book which

Victoria had thrown down on the grass, and opened it at the place where she had left off reading. Mabel went on working, humming a little song the while under her breath, utterly unconscious of the expression, half wild, half weary, that had stolen across her lover's face.

But had Mabel followed her friend into the house I think she would have been startled at what she would have seen. Victoria had left the garden quietly enough, nothing in her look or manner suggesting any effort of self-repression, nothing in her words or tone to indicate a slackening of her habitual self-control. Yet she wanted to get away from the glare of the sunshine, and the buzz of the insects, and the scent of the flowers, and from the sight of Mabel's bright happy face. She wanted to be alone, to confront and to combat the truth that had dawned in her heart. For something in the story which she had been reading aloud had stirred a pulse of feeling, and had made her distinctly conscious at last of that in herself which she had hitherto but vaguely suspected. In the house, in the room half darkened by green blinds, it was quiet, it was cool, and, above all, she could be alone. That happy pair out in the sunshine, amid the birds and flowers, would not follow her in here.

'O, I wish, I wish I had never seen him!' was the passionate cry from her heart; and she kept on repeating this again and again as she paced up and down the room.

'If he only would go away! Why *doesn't* he go away?' she reiterated angrily. 'Why should he waste his time down here when there's so much a man may do—and Mabel's love is safe enough!'

Then she stopped in her restless pacing, and leaning both her

arms on the chimneypiece stared at herself in the mirror. The mouth, so full of strength and purpose, was quivering now with sensibility, and the eyes, usually so calm, were bright and wild, and glowed all the darker for the dark circles underneath that unrest always brings.

Day after day for the last six weeks she had seen Hubert Lefroy. He was in and out of the house continually, for he had a fair claim to be free of Mabel's home, and Victoria herself had given him leave to come and go as he listed. She entertained him without embarrassment as a hostess and as Mabel's friend; she was content to play third person without any officious interference, reading to them when they tired of each other's talk, singing to them of an evening as they sat together in the twilight. She had got into the habit of watching for him and welcoming him for Mabel's sake, till at last she felt, let her deceive herself as she might, it was *not* for Mabel's sake she watched and welcomed now.

Yet she knew that her present frame of mind was disloyal to her friend, inconsistent with her own high ideal of duty, and completely at variance with the whole tenor of her life. And then it was such utter folly. Even supposing she could reconcile the winning of his affections to her conscience, what rational hope had she of success? She was older than he was; the age of romance had, or ought to have, gone by for her. Mabel had youth and beauty on her side. 'While I,' thought Victoria bitterly, as she looked at herself in the glass, 'whatever I may have been *once*, can hardly compete with her now.'

So she strove to recover her normal strength and self-control by dint of hard reasoning; but it

was cruel work, and her heart went back to the piteous passionate cry, which was in itself an admission of weakness, 'I wish I had never, never seen him! If he only would go away!'

But by degrees a better feeling came to her. Had she any right to demand that the happiness of others should be curtailed merely to make her own weakness the easier to cope with? Even if it were possible to arrange matters so that Hubert Lefroy should be compelled to go away for a while, the chief result of such a step would be keen disappointment to Mabel. Nor would it be very unlikely, should some suspicion of the truth be thereby excited in Mabel's mind, the natural outcome of which would be to cause her bitter sorrow, and would probably strike a death-blow at the friendship which had hitherto brought such complete pleasure to both. No. It came home to Victoria's heart that, for Mabel's sake, nothing must be done to induce Hubert Lefroy to absent himself even for a while. And the courage and self-control, which she had vainly sought to bring back at the bidding of reason, began to resume their accustomed sway under the better guidance of a tenderness which shrank from shielding self, even in the moment of its weakness, at the cost of a loved one's peace and happiness.

When she had taken this resolution she felt herself becoming calmer—*happier* it would perhaps be too much to allege of her actual state of mind, but calmer, with a resigned numb passivity higher than which not even the noblest natures can rise, in the first moments of an accepted self-sacrifice and self-effacement. And with a partially regained tranquillity came the power to reflect more effectively. Though it would be

selfish to separate Mabel and Hubert during this, perhaps, the happiest part of all their lives, it would spoil no one's pleasure were she herself to go away. The matter could be easily arranged, bearing the stamp of reality so as to excite no wonder and no suspicion—private business of her own, entirely independent of Mabel, being put forward as the excuse.

Just at this crisis in her reflections the afternoon post came in, bringing her a letter which, by one of those curious turns of circumstance that sometimes serve to settle definitely a hitherto half-formed plan, was such as might be made to do duty for the required business excuse. A faint sad smile stole across her features as, with a touch of superstition from which few of us are, I think, wholly free, she accepted this coincidence of the letter in token that her resolve was meant to be carried into effect.

'Mab darling,' she said, when, a few minutes later at tea-time, she rejoined Mabel and Hubert Lefroy in the garden, 'do you think you could arrange with Mrs. Lefroy for her to take you in for a bit? I find I must leave home—on some tiresome business.'

'O!' exclaimed Mabel, sounding a long note of surprise and disappointment, 'isn't that something new and sudden?'

'Not altogether; I've been expecting it,' said Victoria quietly, as she poured out three cups of tea. 'Do you think you could arrange it, dear?'

'O, easily!' replied Mabel. 'Mrs. Lefroy has been wanting me to go over there for the last month, hasn't she, Hubert? Only I told her I had treated you badly enough already, and I didn't mean to leave you again for the rest of the summer. But if you run

away from me, of course that alters the case. I daresay you won't mind having me, shall you, Hubert?

And she smiled merrily in his face. He smiled at her an instant in return, but made no further reply.

'You might take a note from me to your mother, mightn't you?' she said, recurring to the subject some minutes later. 'What time do you start home?'

'I ought to be going at once,' he replied, looking at his watch.

'O no, not yet,' she pleaded; 'you can walk it easily in twenty minutes.'

'I'm afraid I must, Mab,' he said. 'We've somebody coming to dine, you see, and I promised my mother to be home in good time. Would you mind writing your note at once, dear?'

'O, very well! You're in a desperate hurry, I must say,' said Mabel, pretending to pout; and she went into the house to write her note, leaving Hubert Lefroy and Mrs. Lacy alone together under the walnut-tree.

There was silence between them; not the silence which springs from a complete mutual understanding, but the silence of embarrassment. She felt as if she could not exert herself to entertain him, even if her life had depended on it. She sat still, stroking the long hair of the blue Skye terrier, till the situation became insufferable.

'Mabel is a very long time writing her note,' she said, getting up from her chair. 'I wonder what she can be about?'

She turned and moved towards the house, and Hubert Lefroy, getting up also, walked by her side over the grass. Then, just as they reached the open window, that same window through which, six weeks before, he had seen her for the first time, he suddenly stopped, and said abruptly:

'Mrs. Lacy, why, *why* have you made up your mind to go away just now?'

She was so startled by the question, and in her present unhinged frame of mind it so jarred upon her, that she turned and looked at him with an expression of anger assumed to conceal her deeper feelings, and for once in her life Victoria Lacy forgot to be courteous.

'Mr. Lefroy,' she replied, 'what can it possibly signify to *you* that I have made up my mind to go away just now?'

'I beg your pardon,' he answered humbly; 'I ought not to have asked.'

And at that moment Mabel appeared with her note.

## V.

If you have realised at all how complete was the affection between these two friends, how unreservedly the one had poured forth her whole soul in her happiness, how tenderly and unconditionally the other had given her sympathy, then you may imagine something of what Victoria Lacy suffered in combating the conflicting claims of her heart. On the one hand she was conscious of her weakness; on the other she despised herself as mean and treacherous. Excited emotions and a sleepless night left her next morning with unstrung nerves, and in a state of unusual irritability.

'I think there is going to be a thunderstorm,' she said, in answer to Mabel's tender inquiries. 'You know, I always get a headache when there is too much electricity in the atmosphere.'

'You don't look well, my sweet, certainly, whatever it is,' said Mabel. 'Perhaps it's a good

thing you're going for a change, as you haven't been away for so long. Now I am due at the school this morning, you know; but do let me make you comfortable on the sofa first. I'm sure a nap would do you good.'

Mabel's attentions were very tender and very thoughtful; she pulled down the blinds, arranged the sofa-cushions, and fetched some eau de Cologne and a fan. Her tread was light, her touch soothing, her kiss soft; and yet Victoria felt thankful when she closed the door gently behind her, and left the house.

Physical exhaustion, however, must have its way; and Victoria was gradually losing herself in a half doze, when she was roused by a ring at the door-bell; and before she had time to decide whether she would allow the visitor to be admitted or not, she recognised the too-familiar step of Hubert Lefroy.

He came in, as he was in the habit of coming, without any formal announcement, wished her good-morning, and sat down opposite to her, as he had done so frequently since that first time when they sat together by the open window. Yet she could not help noticing something constrained in his manner which it had never evinced formerly.

'You know it is Mabel's morning at the school,' she said, in a tone expressive of some surprise. He knew as well as she did that Mabel was out on a Wednesday morning, and he never came at that time.

'I have brought a message from my mother, to say she will be delighted for Mabel to come to us at any time, whenever you settle to go,' he replied.

'Mrs. Lefroy is very kind; I shall probably go by the five-o'clock train this afternoon,' she

said; 'but though you are going to have her all to yourself so soon, Mab will certainly be disappointed to find you have been here so early this morning.'

'I didn't come to see *her* this morning, Mrs. Lacy; I came to see *you*,' he replied, in the low emphatic tone of a man who has something he means to say, and has made up his mind to say it at once. She felt then as if a sudden chill had paralysed all her faculties, so that she was unable to find an answer, while he continued, speaking rapidly and with a growing excitement. 'I ventured to ask you yesterday why you had made up your mind to leave home just now; of course I know I had no right to ask it, but I hardly knew what I was saying at the moment. And you answered me, as you were perfectly justified in answering, what could it possibly signify to me. You were quite right; it should not, it ought not, to signify; and yet I only know that it *does*. O, you may think what you will of me when I have made the confession; but since I have known you, haven't you seen that it has been to see *you* that I have come here day after day?'

He had risen from his seat while speaking, and as he uttered these last words she involuntarily rose too. The first feeling that came to her was one of bewildered joy; all other considerations were momentarily merged in the sudden consciousness that he loved her. Only momentarily, however; and then conscience rose up and speedily swept away the joy with a reactionary wave of bitter anguish. Yesterday she had but known the secret of her *own* heart, she had believed herself to have done no more than give away that for which she could hope to receive no return, and

even so it had been hard to see her duty clearly. To-day she knew the secret of his heart also; she might receive as much as she would give—that for which she had longed might be hers, and yet she could not, dared not take it.

‘O no, no,’ she exclaimed wildly, ‘you do not mean it! I know you do not really—you cannot!’

Somehow, now the truth was revealed to her, she almost wished it were not so; for whatever else she might feel and know concerning Hubert Lefroy, this one fact could not be forgotten,—that he had won the love of Mabel Carr, and had pledged his love to her.

‘I do,’ he answered emphatically. ‘I have watched you, listened to you, talked with you; no woman has ever been to me what you have been. O, I know what you mean; I know what you’re thinking; I understand your scruples; I indorse your judgment; but the truth remains—I love you! Don’t shrink from the truth in return: you love me! For pity’s sake, don’t deny it!’

‘I never thought you knew it!’ she cried. ‘God knows I never meant to let you find it out!’

‘Could I help it?’ he replied. ‘Do you think I didn’t follow your feelings when reading aloud yesterday? Do you think I didn’t understand the meaning of your suddenly leaving home? Yes, I know my conduct must seem base and cowardly. I know how I must be branded in the eyes of the world; but I have risked it all for love of you; and you—you will stand by me for love’s sake, will you not, you who have nothing to risk?’

Then a sudden courage came to Victoria as she recognised the three distinct claims made to her sense of what was right. To save

him from the weakest part of his own nature, to stand to what her conscience told her was true, and to prevent, so far as it rested with her, the shattering of Mabel’s dearest hopes.

‘No,’ she said; and though her features were very white, she looked him steadily in the eyes. ‘No, it may not, it *cannot* be! Do I seem hard, unkind, inconsistent? Ah, believe me, you will judge me better by and by! Ask yourself—could I ever look Mabel in the face, could I ever take her by the hand again, if I answered you differently? So my last word to you is, *no*; and I feel I have decided rightly for us both, though you cannot guess now, perhaps you never *will* guess, what it has cost me to answer you thus.’

There was that about Victoria Lacy which stamped her decisions as absolutely irreversible. He saw that further appeal was useless; and irritated by the consciousness that he had swerved from upright conduct for no avail, possibly too by the feeling that her strength was greater than his, he suffered himself to lose his self-control.

‘You may have your own reasons for returning me such an answer,’ he said bitterly, ‘and prudence may seem to you a more commendable thing than consistency; and at least I thank you for opening my eyes before it is all too late. I feel, of course, that I have lost even your good esteem, which I might have kept; yet I should *never* have gone so far had you not led me on. If I had not thought you saw to what my fate was tending, do you think I would have come here this morning to say what I have said? But your last words yesterday were a direct encouragement to me to come. Yes, Mrs. Lacy, I have been base, cowardly, selfish,



cruel, anything you will,—very mad and reckless, I don't deny; but that it has come to *this* has been your doing, and yours only!"

And with no other form of parting he turned and left the room.

Victoria let him go with no spirit to confront his cruel charge, no heart to bid him acknowledge his error. She remained standing, dumb and motionless, utterly worn out, feeling in those few moments as if she had lived a lifetime, as if everything for her were ended now. She had crushed out her feelings at a cost to herself which he probably would never rightly estimate; and he had gone out from her presence with injustice on his lips and anger in his heart. One thing only remained,—the consciousness that she had acted loyally by her friend. Mabel at least was happy.

She drew aside the window-blinds, thinking that the sunshine and the bright beauty of the flowers might do her some good; and then she was aware of Mabel standing on the gravel walk beside the window, with wide-open angry eyes, and such an expression on lips and brow as she had never confronted Victoria Lacy with before. Thus they stood, face to face, for one half minute, the most miserable half minute I think that either of them had ever spent, till Mabel broke forth with the vehement question:

'Who was that speaking to you just now?'

She knew well enough, but she chose to have an admission from Victoria's own mouth.

'Mr. Lefroy.'

'And he was speaking like that to you; you who have been calling yourself my friend, and have been welcoming him here—only for your own ends! And I trusted you all the while, trusted you as

one woman should never trust another! O Victoria, Victoria, I never, never could have believed it of you!'

She paused an instant, catching her breath with a sob she could not repress, then burst forth again:

'I heard what he said—that he had been mad and reckless, but that you had led him on; that your words yesterday had encouraged him to come, that it was your doing it had come to this! And you never replied a word! I listened to hear if you would tell him he was unjust; but you didn't, you couldn't, you didn't dare! Nothing—no, nothing can ever make me believe that he has been wilfully faithless; it was a mad mistake on his part; there's no one in the world can make herself more attractive than you when you choose. But I wish I could feel as I used towards you; yes, I do wish it with all my heart!'

There were tears in Mabel's deep-blue eyes as she gazed with an expression that seemed to implore some assurance that she was judging wrongly. For where love and high admiration and firm belief have once existed it is a bitter thing to see them broken at a blow; that they could ever have been makes it all the harder to realise that they can ever cease to be. Yet with no further knowledge of the actual facts than had been conveyed to her by overhearing Hubert Lefroy's parting words, Mabel's reproaches were perfectly justifiable. Either her friend or her lover had cruelly wronged her; she had to decide which of the two would be the more likely under the circumstances deliberately to fail in faith to her; and she decided as was but natural, all things considered.

It was evident to Victoria that Mabel had only overheard the conclusion of the painful scene

between herself and Hubert Lefroy, and her first impulse was to tell Mabel the whole truth. The next instant, however, she checked the impulse. Conscious that her heart had gone out of her own keeping, all unwittingly though it had been, she felt the explanation would be hard to make clearly. And then she could only establish her own justification at Hubert Lefroy's expense. No; it was better that she herself should be cruelly misjudged than that his weakness should be exposed, better that Mabel should condemn her friend than that she should learn from her the whole truth concerning the man she loved.

Mabel paused a moment; she expected at least some excuse; perhaps she felt herself entitled to be answered by some word of remorse; but no such word came. An intense effort at self-control gave to Victoria's features an expression which Mabel misconstrued into one of stubborn pride; the stronger nature would not stoop to own itself weak and erring. A revulsion of bitter anger swept away any lingering inclination to restore peace by pardon; and lifting her beautiful brows with the scornful trick of expression which seldom conveyed so much meaning as now, she brushed past Victoria Lacy and went upstairs. An hour or two later, when Victoria, keeping to her resolve, started on her journey, Mabel, to avoid the painfulness of the parting, was not to be found in the house.

And if the consciousness of having acted rightly is in itself some compensation for any loss, however heart-breaking, any sacrifice, however bitter, then let us hope it stood Victoria Lacy in good stead now, for surely she needed such compensation sorely enough.

## VI.

FIVE years, and midsummer morning broke bright and still on the shores of one of Italy's fairest lakes. The heavens and the water were blue, and the nearer slopes were green with waving woods till they merged in the deep purple of the distant mountains. The sunlight shimmered on the waves, and gleamed on the little white *campanili* that peeped out amid the hillside foliage; there were boats moored beneath a group of pollard willows idly rocking on the water, and from the beach came up the ceaseless clink-clink of the stonemason's hammer as he shaped the solid granite that had been hewn out of the neighbouring quarries.

It was a scene and a climate that Victoria Lacy loved above all others. Day by day the steamers came in from Ancona or from Locarno bringing fresh tourists to these sweet shores; day by day the diligence carried a cargo of passengers away to the Simplon Pass; but she had lingered for weeks by the Lago Maggiore, and for weeks she intended to linger on. Yet as she stood that morning on the shingly shore, watching the boats that came and went between the land and the Isola Pescatore, her thoughts were not of the woods and lake, not of the snow-capped mountains or the glistening granite quarries, nor even of the beautiful sunburnt *bambini* that gambolled half-naked in the shallow water; they had gone back to a sweet spring morning long ago, when in a little wooded dingle Mabel Carr sat among the primroses and the violets, with the fresh moss at her feet and the birds singing in the branches overhead.

That was the last summer Victoria had seen her English home.

Could she have wandered thither now she would have found sad changes wrought by the unsparring hands of time and neglect. The pathway to that dingle was choked with briars and nettles, and her rose-garden was a wilderness. Her home had passed into the hands of those who cared for none of these things as *she* had cared.

And what of Mabel, she wondered—her Queen Mab, whose bright beauty and loving heart had been to her so precious, for whom she had suffered and had sacrificed so much?

Since that summer day five years ago when they had parted they had never once met. That it had been so had been of Victoria's doing, not of Mabel's. There were moments when Mabel's heart went back to its old belief and its old affection, when she pined for a touch of the soft light hand, for a sight of the deep dark tender eyes. In such moments she thought of Victoria as steadfast and strong and true as she had learnt to think of her once, as it was hard—at times almost impossible—to give up thinking of her still. And it was, perhaps, not the least part of Victoria's accepted self-sacrifice that she could answer Mabel's appeals with a denial. Full justice she could not and she would not do herself in Mabel's eyes; with less than full justice and the utmost truth between them, it was best they should not meet. 'I said I could live for her,' said Victoria, taking her resolve to herself, 'and so I will; but it must be by separation and in silence.'

And it was, perhaps, for the sake of another than Mabel that Victoria deemed it best to keep her presence out of her friend's home.

For Hubert Lefroy had married Mabel Carr. After his repulse

by Mrs. Lacy he went back, half in bitter remorse, half in a revulsion of genuine feeling, to more than his old allegiance; and Mabel, who worshipped with all the passion of a loyal nature, and who could not lightly dethrone her idol, pardoned him because it would have been such acute agony to have believed him really untrue, and because she did not think she could go through life without him.

Yet Victoria Lacy was not always equally brave: there were moments, as now, when a mist would gather in her eyes, and a sob tremble on her lips, and a yearning would strain at her heart that she might stand righted and trusted in the eyes of the friend she loved. For in all these years in which she had travelled, taking her share in the work, the amusements, the occupations of life—years in which she had learnt to love some, and had been beloved by many—she had never yet found one who had been to her a friend such as Mabel Carr.

She turned away from the majestic mountains and the soft sky and the lovely lake: something in the bright beauty of the morning, in the sweet languor of surrounding life, seemed out of keeping with her weary wailing mood. She left the shingly shore, crossed the dusty trodden highway, and began to ascend a narrow pathway up the wooded hillside, where the chestnut and the acacia met overhead, and the butterflies danced amid the long grass, bright with the scabious, pink and blue. Victoria toiled on, indifferent to the steep ascent and the rugged ground, thankful only for the silence and the shade.

Nor did she notice when the shadow on the pathway deepened, and the blue strips of sky twinkled no longer through the green leaves.

She did not realise that the fitful mountain climate had changed its mood, and that heavy storm-clouds were rolling up from the south, till she caught the sound of a distant thunder rumble, and heard the rain-drops pattering on the leaves and stones. She was some way from Baveno; the drops that dripped from every leaf soon made the green protection worse than useless, and she had no umbrella, only a flimsy sunshade that was soaked through in a moment. But in all her wanderings up and down this neighbourhood, she had frequented this path before, and she knew that at a short distance she might gain the shelter of a cottage-roof. Quickening her pace she soon reached a small homestead, situated in a narrow open space in the midst of the wood, and consisting of a dwelling-house with a courtyard in front of it, a few sheds for cattle, an acre or two of cultivated land, and a small orchard of mulberry-trees.

The Piedmontese peasantry are hospitable and harmless. Without any ceremony Victoria hurried into the courtyard, where she was suddenly confronted by a spectacle both curious and interesting, and which gave her something else besides herself to think about. In the centre of the courtyard stood a group of four persons: a stalwart swarthy peasant in a high hat and in his shirt-sleeves; a comely woman, evidently his wife, her head uncovered according to the custom of the place and the people; a girl of about twelve or thirteen; and a small, dark, cropped-haired creature, whether boy or girl it was difficult to determine, clad in a shapeless garment that looked as if it had been manufactured out of an old sack. This family group were clustered round a little fair-haired

boy, who, mounted on a donkey, was roaring with all the force of a lusty pair of lungs. The child's dress was not that of a peasant; his appearance rather English than Italian. Victoria's first idea was that she must suddenly have lighted on some malpractices carried on in the seclusion of the wood; but a rapid explanation on the part of the comely *contadina*, with whom she was acquainted, soon set her straight on this point.

It appeared that 'il Signorino Inglese' had been brought thither for shelter from the storm by the boy in charge of him and the donkey; and that the boy, whom the woman described as 'il mio fratello,' having returned to the hotel at Stresa to procure a cloak for the child, she and her family were vainly endeavouring to induce the small stranger to quit the saddle and to seek shelter indoors. He was clearly frightened at foreign faces and an unknown tongue; but it was a pity, she opined, that the *bambino* should get wet. Perhaps the Signora, being herself English, might be able to persuade him.

The Signora thought she might. She drew nearer, and gazed at the little fellow an instant with her soft kind eyes. He was but a baby-boy, barely four years old, with flaxen hair and large blue questioning eyes, and tiny features that would have been pretty had they not just now been quivering with terror and disfigured with tear-stains.

'O, what is the matter with my little man?' she said. The soft tones and the familiar speech checked his sobs. He began to stare, and then wailed out something which she could not understand, but in which she caught the one word 'mamma.' 'I'm sure mamma wouldn't like to see her little boy so wet,' continued

Victoria, passing her hand over the child's wet summer clothing. 'Suppose you come inside there with me; see, I'm getting wet too; you shall sit on my knee if you like, and then you'll be quite safe.'

Thus, with that trust-compelling power which was one of Victoria Lacy's peculiar characteristics, she lifted the child from the saddle and carried him into the house. He did not resist, he rather seemed to cling to her. He sat on her lap and held her dress tight with both his tiny hands, staring at her with round wondering eyes whenever she addressed a remark in Italian to the farmer and his family. When she insisted that his frock must be dried, he let her take it off without remonstrance, and watched the garment with much interest as it hung before the fire. Presently she began to take notice of the dark cropped-haired *bambino* in the sack, and he followed her lead till by degrees his tears and his shyness subsided. When, however, the boy returned with a cloak and an umbrella, and when, the storm having cleared, the donkey was once more saddled, the blue eyes filled again with tears, and he clung to Victoria's dress with the renewed tenacity of terror. She could not help wondering what were the conditions of his home-life that such a mite should be sent out for his ride with no more congenial guardianship than a Piedmontese peasant. The youth was evidently trustworthy and good-natured enough; but to this *signorino* in petticoats the attentions of a nursery-maid rather than those of a groom were surely most suitable. It hardly need his earnest appeal—'Come too!'—to make her resolve to escort him on his way back to Stresa.

'Would Charley like me to

come too?' she asked. 'O, yes; I'll come.'

And so, having taken leave of the kindly peasants, and having presented a few *soldi* to the black-eyed *bambino*, they went on their way together in very friendly fashion, she with her arm round Master Charley's waist. In the course of the walk he grew very communicative, imparting many little incidents of his personal history.

'And why is Charley out to-day with only Colò? Why didn't Sarah come too?' she asked.

'Cos Sarah stay wif mamma an' Sissy an' baby an' papa wot's vezzy, vezzy ill,' was the lucid explanation imparted with great gravity. Hereupon a question or two addressed to Colò, the donkey-boy, elicited the further information that the Signor Inglese, who was ill at Stresa, in the Hôtel des Isles Borromées, was 'molto ammalato,' and not expected to live.

After this Victoria walked on some way in silence. Something of sadness had fallen upon her as she contrasted the child's light heedless prattle with the bereavement that might be hanging over his innocent baby-head. Both she and Colò accompanied him to the very door of the hotel at Stresa, and it was she who lifted him out of the saddle. Just at that moment a young woman appeared in the doorway to claim Master Charley, and as Victoria consigned the child to her care, with a brief explanation as to how she had met him, they looked each other curiously and fixedly in the face. Victoria fancied, and yet she was not *quite* sure, that she recognised in this young woman Mabel Carr's former maid, who had accompanied her mistress when she married. She gazed an instant longer till doubt became



certainly, and then with a wild heart-throb she rushed straight to her point.

'Sarah? Sarah Haines? Yes, I am sure it is! Tell me, are you still living with Mrs. Hubert Lefroy, Sarah?'

'Mrs. Lacy, m'm! Why, to be sure so it is!' was the astonished Sarah's first recognition. 'I thought I knew the face, m'm. Yes, m'm; I'm still living with Mrs. Hubert Lefroy.'

A few more questions, and Victoria learnt that Colb had spoken correctly. Hubert Lefroy was lying sick unto death. He had been out of health for some time, and had spent the winter at Cannes with his family; and now a fever had laid him low, and there was little hope for his life. It was strange, Victoria thought, that circumstances should have brought her to the very threshold of this particular affliction, this particular death. She would fain, very fain, have stood by her friend in the hour of need; she yearned, yea in her heart yearned piteously, to gaze once more into *his* eyes; and yet she had no right.

'Sarah,' she said quietly, 'if Mrs. Lefroy *should* ask any question, you may tell her *who* it was brought Charley home to-day.'

She stooped and kissed the little boy with a fervour warranted by something more than their short acquaintance; then she turned away, leaving a message with Colb to bring her word if any change should occur in the dying man's condition.

That same evening he brought this message, 'Il Signor Inglese è morto.'

She waited a few days—waited till the quiet funeral had wound its way up the hillside to the burial-ground under the shadow

of the beautiful little basilica that English benevolence and bounty has erected there—waited till she knew that the body of Hubert Lefroy had been laid to rest among the chestnuts and the acacias. Then she paid a visit to the grave, placed a wreath of flowers upon the freshly-turned sod, and walked away towards Stresa. What would be the upshot of her visit there she knew not, but at least she might inquire after the widow and orphans.

She strolled first into the hotel-garden, and there she found three tiny black-frocked beings, Mabel's fatherless babies, with Sarah watching over their prattle and their play. It would have been a pathetic sight even to a stranger; it brought the tears into Victoria Lacy's eyes. Yet it was less of the children than of their mother that she was thinking then; and it was to learn tidings of *her* that she accosted Sarah.

'You wouldn't like to go and see her, m'm, I suppose?' said Sarah doubtfully, after she had answered the inquiries made. Sarah, in common with others, had once felt the charm of Victoria's influence; she had liked and respected her, and why the two friends parted as they did was a mystery which Sarah could not account for on the supposition of Mrs. Lacy being in fault.

'To see her is the one thing I long for,' cried Victoria, her emotion now getting the better of her, 'the one thing for which I came here to-day, if only I thought she would see me.'

'See you, m'm!' rejoined Sarah warmly; 'why, she'll see you and welcome! If you had only heard the way she was in when I told her you had been and left no address! I've heard her ask for you and call out your name. Go to her, Mrs. Lacy; it



will do her all the good in the world just now.'

So Victoria went; for there was nothing to blame in her going *now*. She went by herself; she would not let any one show her the way, but she stole with her soft tread noiselessly down the long corridor, and gently knocked at the door. No answer. She turned the handle, and resolutely entered the room. It was partially darkened with green Venetian blinds, but the sun still forced its way in, shining in square patches on the uncarpeted parquet. At first Victoria thought the room unoccupied; but a second glance showed her Mabel's fair familiar face pillowed on a sofa-cushion in the shadiest corner. She was asleep, worn out with watching and weeping, sleeping peacefully, almost heavily, unconscious of the intruder's presence, unconscious even when Victoria's soft hand pushed back the little white cap that she might get a full view of the sweet face, with all its well-known wealth of golden hair.

Yes, it was the same face; its beauty somewhat dimmed, perhaps, where the girl's gladness had vanished before the woman's woes, yet a beautiful face still, in the very curves which suffering had traced round the mobile mouth, in the very shadows with which weariness had painted the eyelids.

And what of that waking, when the blue eyes at length unclosed to meet, as if in a dream, the deep true gaze of the woman who years ago had said she could die—yea, more, could live—for her friend? As she had said, she had done. Victoria Lacy had lived in solitude and self-sacrifice to keep from her friend's fireside all bitterness and anger and strife; she had lived to be near her friend

with sympathy and love in the moment of lonely grief. But over the reuniting of these severed threads of a beautiful confidence and communion I would not linger now, lest by the sheer weakness of my words I might mar the idea of its perfect completeness. Only one sentence of that evening's converse shall be recorded here, one sentence whispered by Mabel:

'He told me all,—all the truth; he told me to seek you out, dear friend, my own friend and *his*,—to forgive you if I still thought I had anything to forgive, and to say how he had asked *your* forgiveness for the injustice of his angry words, and for all you had suffered thereby.'

They have a home together once more, these two; not the old home of the flowery dingle, but another no less fair, for they know how to bring beauty where they dwell. And the voices of Charley and his sisters ring through the house and garden, calling for 'auntie' as often as for mother, till Mabel's cheek will sometimes flush a little as she lifts her brows with their own peculiar trick of expression, and says, half in jest and half in earnest, so like the 'Queen Mab' of past years, 'They are as fond of you, dear, every bit, as they are of me.'

The old trusting love is as true as it once was, in the days when they both were younger, with an added reverence and a new tenderness for the sorrows and the losses of each. Only *one* thought is rarely spoken between them: the thought that goes back to a grave on a wooded hillside overlooking a broad blue lake, where the romance of both their lives lies buried beneath the wild white summer roses.

## THE PROGRESS OF WATERING-PLACES.

---

A VERY amusing chapter of our social history might be written on the subject of the development of watering-places. How great and continuous has been this progress will soon become clear on the publication of the new Census returns. We limit our remarks to the watering-places of the seacoast, although the inland watering-places present a history hardly less interesting or extensive. The love of the seaside is really a matter of modern growth. The Royal Family of England greatly fostered it by their visits to Weymouth and Worthing. Otherwise English people cared little for sea-bathing or the immediate vicinity of the sea. They had not learned to appreciate and discuss the benefits of ozone and iodine. They generally left the beach to the fishermen, and built the towns a mile or two inland. Now there is an annual migration to the seaside, and towns spring up with mushroom rapidity. There are many places unfavoured by fashion which are probably quite as healthy—or more so—as any which have become renowned. We take the instances of a few whose great and recent growth are among the most striking phenomena of our time.

Among our fashionable watering-places, Bournemouth, Torquay, and Brighton may be cited as striking examples. Take the case of Bournemouth. Forty years ago there were only a few mud hovels in the lovely valley which is now crowded with splendid gardens and villas. It derives its

name from the little stream that threads the valley on its course to the clear hard sands of the seashore. The site was sheltered, the air singularly dry and mild, and pine-woods as at Archachon were supposed to have a salutary influence through their resinous perfume. Half a century ago not only was there no residence, but also there was no cultivation. A few discerning people began to build houses and cottages, and subsequently whole estates were skillfully laid out. The town has spread on every side beyond the valley of the Bourne. It has a number of palatial residences; it has a large fixed population, and draws crowds of invalids and their families from all parts of the country. Torquay, again, is another great health-resort which has risen to its present splendid proportions in the course of recent years. Torbay has always been famous for its scenic beauty, and Brixham, on its shore, is renowned as the landing-place of William of Orange. Here the Bellerophon anchored, having Napoleon Bonaparte on board. For the first time that English soil was brought before him on which he had so longed to make a descent. 'What a beautiful country!' he exclaimed. 'It reminds me of Porto Ferrajo in Italy.' I am glad to know that the family at Tor Abbey sent the fallen Emperor a present of peaches. The bay was then all alive with boats, for it was the idea of the country people that the Emperor was to be taken up to London. At this time Torquay

simply consisted of a cluster of humble houses beneath the Torre cliffs. Some naval officers left their families here; for the place was cheap, accessible, and the neighbourhood lovely. Young people could enjoy themselves to their hearts' content in the retired coves and the long avenues of lime and elm. The population mainly consisted of fishermen, who were busy in the teeming waters of the bay, and who spread out their nets on the rocks to dry in the sunshine. Macaulay has alluded to it at a still earlier period: 'The quiet shores were undisturbed by the bustle either of commerce or pleasure, and the huts of ploughmen and fishermen were thinly scattered over what is now the site of crowded marts and luxurious pavilions.' The tiny quay has expanded into a harbour. A magnificent pier has been added. The town that nestled in the valley has now climbed all the heights. The population is more than forty thousand, and it occupies a space even greater than in proportion to its population, for it is a happy peculiarity of Torquay that it presents an endless succession of villas embosomed in lawns and gardens.

Brighton has had a remarkable development. As a local writer said, 'Brighton rose like a dream on the remains of a fishing village.' Brighton had its niche in history as the place from which Charles II. made his escape after the catastrophe of Worcester. Also it had its old church of St. Nicholas, on the vane of which some have detected the delineation of a shark, which tourists declared to be emblematical of the landlady of the period. It is curious to see what the old books say of Brighton. *A Tour through Britain* says, 'Brighton Helmston, commonly called Bredhemston,

is a poor fishing town, old built, and on the very edge of the sea.' The *Magna Britannia* of 1737 says that 'the poor inhabitants were diminished to one-third, and that the town would soon be depopulated.' The poor fishermen had their huts on the beach underneath the cliffs, and these were almost periodically swept away by heavy tides. In fact nearly the whole of the old town was beneath the cliff, and the site is now covered by sands and shingle. The first stage in the history of the place was that of a mere fishing village, which seems, however, to have done a considerable business. The chance visitors who came spoke with great admiration of the fleets of mackerel and herring boats in the light of the setting sun.

An old saw said:

'This town or village of renown,  
Like London Bridge, half broken down,  
Few years ago was worse than Wapping,  
Not fit for human soul to stop in;  
But now, like to a worn-out shoe,  
By patching well the place will do.'

The real founder of the fortunes of Brighton, as in the case of so many fashionable watering-places, was a physician. One Dr. Russell became a great advocate of the benefits of sea-bathing. He especially prescribed sea-water for scrofula and for glandular complaints. It is a curious fact that the British nation seems to have awakened quite late to the benefits of sea-bathing. The fishermen of course would gather to the beach and cliffs; but the towns and villages generally took care to establish themselves some miles from the shore. There is reason to believe that even tubbing is quite a modern invention. The new taste for sea-bathing became highly popular, and visitors began to arrive. In the early halcyon days we read that two sitting-rooms, two bedrooms, and a pantry could

be obtained for five shillings a week. The house which the celebrated Dr. Russell used to inhabit became the residence after his decease of the Duke of Cumberland. Hither, in his twentieth year, came on a visit George Prince of Wales, destined to become the second founder of Brighton. The Prince, while bathing, went beyond his depth, and appeared to the bystanders to be running some danger. One old tar rushed into the water after him and warned him to come back. As the Prince took no notice, Mr. Smooker seized him by the arm and turned him back to shore. He apologised by saying, 'I'm not going to let King George hang me because I let the Prince of Wales drown himself.' The Prince took it in good part, and was always kindly and generous to old Smooker. Ultimately he established himself in Brighton, and built his immense toy, the Pavilion, 'with a harem at one end and a chapel at the other.' The Brightonians seem always to have a kindly recollection of King George, and gather up all the anecdotes of kindliness and generosity which relieve the selfishness and sensuality of his life. When Mr. Thackeray wished to engage the Pavilion banqueting-room for his lectures on the Four Georges, it was opportunely suggested that it was hardly etiquette to abuse a man in his own house. The town-hall was therefore taken instead. Her present gracious Majesty, at the commencement of her reign, appears to have made some effort to like the Pavilion, but settled into a preference for the quiet solitude and lawns and groves of Osborne. But though not favoured now by Royalty, Brighton continues to be fashionable, and was never more highly popular than at the pre-

sent time. Every year witnesses a large extension of its boundaries, and a considerable increment to its population.

Eastbourne is a place which for years past has been marvellously growing under my eyes. Every time I visit it the place is sensibly larger. They are steadily working away at the Esplanade, and in course of time it will reach Beachy Head. We may see what Eastbourne used to be by going to the original old-fashioned village. The people built it in a well-timbered fertile hollow, sheltered by the downs; but now there is a magnificent frontage of stately buildings facing the sea, and the town is spreading out in every direction. In winter it is a somewhat drear and deserted place; but climatologists say great things on behalf of its winter climate, the place being so situated that it has two-thirds of a circle of sea. It is a great advantage of Eastbourne that a large part of the soil is included in the princely possessions of the House of Devonshire, which gives the result that the place is nobly laid out with rare costliness and elaboration. One consequence is that no place commands higher prices for houses and apartments than Eastbourne during the summer season. It is not so very long ago that her efforts to become a fashionable watering-place would excite some amount of sympathy and amusement; but these efforts have been crowned with success, and, unless her progress should be arrested by some unlooked-for circumstances, she will be a formidable rival to Brighton and Hastings.

There is a Lancashire watering-place which is justly attaining to a large extension and great celebrity. This is Southport. In 1809 there were only thirty-eight houses and a hundred inhabitants.

At the back of the town there was a wide marsh, known as Maston Mere, which, for a hundred years, gave employment for various schemes to drain it. Moreover the sands created much waste and devastation; and it is said that a great deal of farmland had been overwhelmed. At the present time Southport has been united to the neighbouring village of Birkdale, and has become a favourite village for the Lancashire folk. The Mere has been satisfactorily drained, and now produces abundant crops. The bathing and the sea-air are exceptionally good, and the place has been called the English Montpellier. It is noted for one of those admirable institutions, the Convalescent Hospital. The pier is perhaps the longest pier in the country. Even the very sandhills show something to admire; for there are many hundred species of native flowers, and varieties of shells, rare lizards, and butterflies. Another famous Lancashire watering-place, Blackpool, arose somewhat suddenly from very slight beginnings. It was a small village, so called from a peaty brook it possessed. The peaty brook, like some of the old streams of London, has become a sewer, and Blackpool now presents two miles of frontage to one of the freshest and roughest of seas. The population of Lancashire, at holiday season, pours itself into Southport and Blackpool.

The pursuit of health has not only raised new and splendid towns in England, but has also planted English towns, or at least semi-English towns, in various foreign regions. The French have taken Algiers, but practically the English have also annexed it as a health-resort. They have taken their flight to Madeira and the Azores; their dehabeahs on the

Nile have peacefully invaded Egypt; and in many a foreign town they have taken the most commanding and healthy sites to build up towns of their own. On lately making a visit to Pau and to Nice, I was struck with that large and increasing English element which makes up an integral portion of these towns. Each place has several English churches with large congregations, English shops, English medical men, English banks, with some fixed and a large floating English population. Some of these Riviera watering-places have a distinctly English origin. Cannes is an example. It was the accident of an accident. Lord Brougham was going into Italy, but was stopped on what was then the Italian frontier, owing to some vexatious matter of quarantine. Lord Brougham looked around him, and thought that he might be quite as well off where he was as if he went further on.

For the abundance and vegetation of the climate was really tropical. It is called 'la petite Afrique.' The country abounded with olive-woods, vineyards, and groves of oranges and citrons. The country had a glory of wild-flowers such as are only found at home in our conservatories. Date-palms, cacti, aloes, agaves, abounded in absolute wealth. The climate was bright, equable, and serene. Since Lord Brougham's time the eucalyptus has been also introduced, and the dry fertile soil brings it rapidly to a great size. Lord Brougham informed the world that there was such a place as Cannes. Since his time it has rapidly increased, and was never more prosperous than at the present season. It belongs to the English by the right both of discovery and occupation. There is no place more familiar than the

Villa Brougham in its orange-garden, with its Doric portico and a baronial coat of arms in front. Lord Brougham died here, and was buried in the cemetery, the spot being marked by a tall plain granite cross. Since that time one spot after another has been discovered, colonised, developed by the English, and the pulmonary sufferers of all climates have followed in their wake.

The genesis of such places and their rapid growth is easily described. Some tourist is struck by the beauties and capabilities of a spot, the open sea, the background of mountains, the gardens and terraces, the secluded position, and the cheapness and freshness of things. He settles down in his new winter home, he sings its praises, he gathers his friends around him. The place is soon colonised. Supplies can easily be drawn from Nice on the west, or Genoa on the east. There is always

good fish in the sea and game on the mountains. Comes the clergyman, whose constitution has perhaps been broken down by overwork, and he gathers a tiny congregation, whose offertories enable him to prolong his absence from home. Comes the doctor, whose medical science has warned him of those admonitory symptoms which tell him that he must avoid the rigours of an English winter. The parson and the doctor are the two great elements that help to form and mould the infant society. Those individuals are found, who, with a happy combination of private enterprise and public spirit, start the *pension* or the hotel. Other industries and occupations speedily follow. The splendid villa multiplies. The railway company makes a station. And in this way we have almost before our eyes the sudden making of a fashionable watering-place.

---



## THE LADY-KILLER-IN-CHIEF.

### CHAPTER I.

'Most awfully shabby,' said Dorothy St. George calmly; 'but then, since I have not another, what am I to do? I am not a spider, therefore I cannot evolve a new gown out of my own inner consciousness.'

'Let me give you a gown—two gowns,' pleaded Jack Sinclair, flushing a little under the girl's steady gaze, yet looking very handsome and soldierly in the brilliant June sunshine.

'My good Jack,' returned Miss St. George quietly, 'have you sufficient money to pay your debts?'

'No,' he admitted unwillingly.

'Then how can you afford to buy me gowns? And how can you imagine for one moment that I should take them, if you could?'

'If you loved me—' he began.

'My good Jack,' said the girl again gravely, lifting her azure eyes leisurely to his, 'it seems to me that you are a great deal too well assured of the state of my feelings. Some people, you know, have a habit of counting their chickens before they are hatched.'

'O Dolly, you do love me?' he cried.

'Perhaps just a little,' half indifferently; 'certainly not enough to let you buy me—*clothes!*' with a sudden shamed flush at the bare idea of it.

Jack Sinclair sighed impatiently. He had no such pride himself; but then, to be sure, no cavalry officers ever have, except they are rank men. He, that very morn-

ing, had shaved himself in Broughton's room, because Broughton had just had his razors ground; he had passed on to the next room to sponge the remains of the lather off his face, because Broughton was using his sponge and basin for a like purpose; he had borrowed a collar-stud on his way back to his own quarters, because his laundress had sent his shirt home minus a button at the throat; and before he finished dressing he had lent his last clean cotton tie to Dickson, who had got two days' leave; he had surrendered his hair-brushes to Squints, who had walked in for no apparent reason—perhaps because some one was using his—and had helped Ponto out of a difficulty by the loan of a shell-jacket. Thus Jack Sinclair, accustomed to regard his belongings and those of his brother-officers as public property, could not understand why the suggestion that he should buy his *fiancée* a gown—which, goodness knows, she stood sorely in need of—need bring that shamed flush to her proud face.

'Then how will you do?' he asked at length, rather ruefully.

'Stay at home,' she laughed; then sang, in a rich mellow voice,

"Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest,  
Home-keeping hearts are happiest!"

'O, I daresay!' Jack put in, very ruefully indeed. But the girl only laughed and sang on:

"For those that wander, they knew not where,  
Are full of trouble and full of care:  
To stay at home is best."

'But, Dolly, my darling,' he

interrupted, 'couldn't Mrs. St. George lend you a dress?'

'Mrs. St. George,' answered Dorothy, regarding him gravely, yet with laughter in her brilliant eyes, 'is possessed of *one* presentable gown besides the one you see her in every day.'

'I'm sure she would lend it to you,' cried Jack.

'It is a *moiré antique*,' said Dorothy, as if there need be nothing more said upon the subject.

'Well, what of that? I remember, the last time I was at home, my mother was wearing one, a bright-green one it was, with white-pot buttons—she said they were porcelain, but I knew better.'

'Ah!' remarked Dorothy, without much interest.

'Then you'll come to the sports to-morrow, darling?'

'The *moiré*,' returned Dorothy, 'is of the most startling rose-colour you ever saw. Why, Jack, all the women would be laughing at us!'

'Let them,' he rejoined fiercely; 'who cares?'

'I do, for one. No, Jack: some day, when we are rich, I will go to the sports; and I'll give a cup, and you shall run for it.'

'I don't see why you can't come in the gown you've got on,' he grumbled; 'it looks awfully jolly;' but, all the same, he was very well aware that the garment in question was very, very shabby. It was so entirely out of keeping with its wearer. Jack thought, as he watched her that lovely June day, that he had never seen a more perfect picture than she made as she sat upon the river's bank, the willows and the turf making a background against which her radiant loveliness shone out more like a gem in a dark setting than anything else he could think of. She had taken off her hat, and the sunshine streamed down upon her golden head, giving the heavy

braids the appearance of a diadem. Jack wished passionately that he could have given her a crown of rubies and diamonds; and yet he knew that no gold would ever become her as did those imperial coils of lustrous hair, no sapphires would ever equal the beauty of her azure eyes.

And yet she was so very, very shabby; her brown-stuff gown was positively threadbare—'bright as a sixpence,' she said. One little foot was visible beneath the frill of her gown, and an inch or two of a slender ankle: they, the foot and the ankle, were all right, Jack had admired them dozens of times; but the boot which covered the foot—O, it made him absolutely shiver! Seven-and-sixpence a pair, with square toes that seemed to be of an inquiring turn! Ugh! Jack looked from them to his own patent-leather and canvas boots at thirty-five shillings a pair, and thought of the dozen or two of others which stood all in a neat row in the lowest compartment of his cupboard, and he had the grace to feel ashamed of himself. If Dorothy St. George could case her little slender feet in such boots as those and keep out of debt, why need he, a great hulking brute, with feet like potatoes, have a bootmaker's bill as long as his arm?

He looked, too, at her little hands folded idly before her, such pretty hands, with pink-tinted filbert nails; then his eyes fell upon a certain mark along the forefinger of the one which lay uppermost, and, bending down, he kissed it, as if he would fain kiss that disfiguring seam away. O, why should she have to work so hard, whilst his sisters, not half so fair, dawdled their time away, and gave dresses to their maid such as Dorothy could never afford to buy! O, why should it

be? A flush mounted to the young man's brow, and his eyes sank before the glory of hers: the question was easy to answer. He had 'sown the wind' in a long course of reckless extravagance, in the raising of his father's just anger; now he was 'reaping the whirlwind' in banishment from home, and in the pain of knowing that between Dorothy St. George and him lay a long array of debts which he had no money to pay.

And there are people who say our sins do not find us out in this world!

'O my darling,' he cried, with a sudden burst of passion, 'how I will make up to you for all this some day!'

'Some day,' she repeated wistfully, 'if, by the time you come into your kingdom, you have not repented, Jack?'

'Repented! Why?'

'You will be rich, I still poor.'

'Supposing I remained always poor and you became very rich, would you desert me, Dolly?'

'I cannot say, I am sure,' she laughed. 'I have always been so awfully poor, you see, that if I were suddenly lifted up in the world I might tiptilt my nose, even at you.'

'Ah, you don't mean that,' he said coolly.

'There's many a true word spoken in jest,' she quoted gravely.

'Then, thank God, there is no chance of it!' he cried vehemently.

'No, indeed,' with a smile half bitter, half sad. 'Do you know, Jack, that I don't know who I am? I never shall know it.'

'Yes, yes; you told me. Don't talk about it.'

'But I must talk about it; you ought to know,' she answered. 'To begin at the beginning, I must tell you my mother's name was Meredith. At sixteen she was left

to the care of her uncle, a clergyman in North Wales. Her father also had been a clergyman. She had not been many weeks at Llangwylt before she met my father, who was staying in the neighbourhood for the trout-fishing. He fell in love with her and married her; my great-uncle married them himself. After the marriage they went abroad; and one day it came out quite by chance that he had been married under a false name—George St. George. He assured her that the legality of the marriage was certain. He told her also that his reason for deceiving her was because his uncle, who had very large unentailed estates, had arranged a marriage for him; and if he heard anything of my mother would probably cut him off with but a very small property. My mother never troubled herself about it; she loved him, and she had perfect faith in him, and so a few months passed over. He seems, although quite young, being only seven-and-twenty at the time of the marriage, to have had a most passionate and unforgiving temper, as my mother found to her cost—and mine; for one day she angered him so much that he left her. I fancy she had been in a passion herself, and had cried out that she no longer loved him. Whatever it was, he never forgot it or forgave it. "You shall never see me again," he told her; "*and you shall never know who you are.*" From that day to this she has never seen him. For anything we know to the contrary he may have been a chimney-sweeper. Mother went back to Llangwylt, and I was born there; and when her uncle died six years ago we came here, to starve upon seventy pounds a year,' she broke off bitterly.

'Did she never try to find him out?'

'Uncle Meredith did; but mother was too proud.'

'What a strange story! Jack said thoughtfully; 'and O, by Jove, what a beastly temper he must have had!'

'Ah, that's where mine comes from,' rejoined Dorothy calmly. 'Who's that, Jack?' as a boat passed them, a graceful outrigger, with a man in white flannels, who came as near to the bank as he could venture, evidently to stare at her, and who, after a salutation to Jack, sculled away and was out of sight in no time.

'That, my darling, is the handsomest man in the service,' Jack answered. 'We call him the Lady-Killer-in-Chief.'

## CHAPTER II.

THE Lady-Killer-in-Chief had changed his flannels for his ordinary clothes—light-gray trousers and a coat of gray velveteen. He certainly, as he sauntered down the High-street at Blankhampton, merited the homage which was paid to his personal appearance when his brother-officers spoke of him as the handsomest man in the service. The only fault in his face was its extreme coldness: cold classic features; cold blond hair, irreproachably parted down the middle, and brushed straight away behind his ears without a hair being out of place; cold hazel eyes, large and beautiful in themselves; and a cold smile, like the flickering of a feeble winter sun over snow-topped mountains. An utterly cold manner too—which to women seemed irresistible—and perhaps the most cutting caustic wit that had ever made itself felt in the mess-room of the Blankhampton Barracks. Swagging leisurely down the High-

street he met with Dickson, who, as a matter of course, stopped.

'Where have you been?'

'I've been for a pull. The river's awfully jolly to-day, and—by the bye, Dickson'—plunging at once into the subject uppermost in his thoughts—'can you tell me who that girl is Sinclair goes about with—tall girl with golden hair?'

'I don't know her name. I believe Sinclair's going to marry her.'

'Going to marry her! Ah, is it settled?'

'I really don't know. She's a very handsome girl,' remarked Dickson carelessly.

'Uncommonly,' Montagu replied, with what, for him, was great warmth. 'And so Sinclair's serious?'

'O, quite so!' adding, with a laugh, 'Has she "taken" you rather? No use; she's awfully in love with Sinclair.'

'Pooh! I'll cut him out in a week,' cried Montagu confidently.

'I don't believe she'll look at you.'

'Won't she? Well, you'll see,' and then the two men parted and went their respective ways, neither of them in the least aware that the subject of their conversation was just within the door of the shop behind them, and had heard their whole conversation, with proud scorn filling her violet eyes, and utter contempt on her imperious mouth.

Bryan Montagu did not find the task he had set himself altogether easy to accomplish, for he could not succeed in making a start. In the first place he did not know who she was, nor where she lived; and since he never met her anywhere he could not obtain an introduction. However, at last he happened to meet her with Sinclair in a shop, and asked boldly to be introduced.

Miss St. George was very gracious to him. She smiled so enchantingly that Jack straightway went off into a towering rage and scolded her all the way home, at which she laughed more heartily than he had ever heard her laugh in his life. To add to his wrath, Montagu informed him during dinner that evening that Miss St. George was really very decent-looking; 'and I believe I passed you on the river one day last week,' he ended.

'Yes, and you turned and stared at her as if she'd been some little milliner-girl,' Jack returned sulkily.

'The penalty of beauty, my dear chap,' laughed Montagu lightly. 'Now I assure you I'm so accustomed to be ogled that I should feel quite uncomfortable with people who didn't admire me.'

'Miss St. George didn't admire you, at all events,' retorted Jack, with a short laugh; 'for she said she never saw such a "screw" in her life.'

At which Bryan Montagu, who was really a very pretty oar, though, perhaps, with a slight tendency to 'screw,' was, for once, taken aback; and registered an inward vow that before many days were over he would pay Miss St. George out with interest for that unflattering remark. And pay her out, how! As he had made many another girl suffer before—broken-hearted for the cold hazel eyes which for her had been wont to have no coldness in their clear depths; for the straight-featured classic face which had made itself her heaven; for the sound of the smooth persuasive voice which would fall upon her ears never more, or, if perchance it did so, fraught only with slighting indifference more hard to bear than silence. That was the

plan Mr. Bryan Montagu marked out as Miss St. George's punishment.

Accordingly the following afternoon, instead of betaking himself to the club, or his more favourite river, he turned in the direction of the village in which Mrs. St. George's little house was; and, as luck would have it, just as he passed the Cotherstone's house he saw Miss St. George emerge from the gate of her cottage, and turn down the lane leading to the river. He followed instantly, and reached her just as she was about to pass through the little gate which opened into the River Fields.

Mr. Montagu lifted his hat with his most fascinating smile. Miss St. George blushed becomingly, and half drooped her splendid eyes. Mr. Montagu thought he had never before beheld so lovely a face. Miss St. George thought—well, she *looked* as if she found herself in Arcadia.

'You are going for a walk?' he asked.

'Well, no. I am going to sit by the edge of the river and read,' she replied.

'May I come with you and talk instead?' he asked imploringly.

'O yes, if you like,' she replied calmly, thinking what a lucky thing it was that Jack was safely out of the road, being on duty that day.

Any one who could have heard their conversation that afternoon must have laughed, even if it had been Jack Sinclair himself; they were so awfully polite, to begin with. Each seemed to be trying how fascinating he or she could be. Each seemed so desperately anxious to make the other pleased. They got along like a house on fire, which is, as every one knows, a tolerably rapid rate. In fact,

they got on so well that Mr. Montagu had already advanced as far as personal compliments, ere Miss St. George found out she really *must* be going home, with an emphasis on the 'must,' by which she evidently intended to convey to him the fact that only stern necessity compelled her to move at all. But they got still further before they reached the gate of Mrs. St. George's cottage; for, after a little circumlocution, she promised to meet him at the same time and place the following afternoon. All the same, she raised but very little objection before she consented, and Mr. Montagu felt he had never come across a cherry so ripe and ready to fall into his mouth.

'Hollo, Sinclair!' he called out to Jack, whom he met in the square. 'Down in the mouth, eh? Ah, it's an awful nuisance not being able to get out of the square, isn't it? Particularly when there's a nice young woman half a mile off waiting for you. And she *did* look so nice this afternoon.'

The hot anger leapt into Jack Sinclair's gray eyes, but his heart grew cold as lead within him, for he had never felt very sure of Dorothy; and if Montagu made up his mind to go in for her, he knew well enough that he would spare no pains to accomplish the desirable attainment of putting his (Jack's, that is) nose out of joint.

'How do you know?' he growled.

'Because she has been with me for the last three hours,' Montagu returned coolly.

'I don't believe it!' poor Jack thundered; but all the same he felt from the other's manner that it was true.

'Just as you like, of course, my dear chap,' said Montagu carelessly; 'but go along the path

leading through the River Fields to-morrow afternoon between three and four, and you will see for yourself.'

Sinclair turned away without answering, for Montagu's quiet manner had left him without hope. Of course the following afternoon he went, and saw for himself that his comrade had spoken truly. There, just visible about the river's bank, was Dorothy's hatless golden head, and in suspicious nearness to it Montagu's sleek blond *caput*; and whilst he stood there watching and half hidden by the hedge, her merry laugh rang out upon the still summer air in a peal which reëchoed in Jack's heart like the death-knell of all his dearest hopes. O, he was reaping the whirlwind, and no mistake about it!

'Now did you do as I advised?' Montagu asked him at mees that night, in a tone of sneering triumph. 'Are you convinced?'

'Hang you!' cried poor Jack passionately.

'By no means,' returned Montagu calmly, going on with his dinner as if that was the chief object of his existence. 'You shouldn't allow yourself to fly into such transports of rage, my dear chap; it's not good form, to begin with; it's bad for the digestion—bad every way. You're a deuced good fellow, Sinclair; but you go into everything with such terrible earnestness. It spoils you, my dear fellow; and it will be getting you into trouble one of these days, take my word for it.'

But during the weeks which followed, Jack's rage had time enough to cool. As far as Dorothy was concerned, he had resigned in favour of Bryan Montagu, who had contrived to get the *entrée* to the house, and who pretty nearly lived there. Twice



Dorothy had written to know why he kept away, and to ask him to come; and both times he had sent a formal reply, declining the invitation. He scarcely went outside the barracks, and when he did so, went between six and seven—a time when he knew Dorothy was very unlikely to be out.

At last, however, he was one day compelled to go into the town early in the afternoon; and about half-way down the High-street he saw Dorothy and Montagu coming on the same side of the street. They were close upon him before he perceived them, but he did not hesitate a moment. He turned sharply to the right, and crossed over to the other side without so much as a look, and without any recognition whatever. Dorothy turned very white, but she kept a brave front to the world, and laughed it off as usual. Montagu tackled Jack upon the subject that evening.

'Now I tell you what it is, Sinclair,' he said, leaning back in his chair, and surveying Jack with much amusement in his eyes, 'your behaviour is what I call uncommonly shabby. Blow hot, blow cold, you know.'

'Mind your own business,' returned Jack sulkily.

'Ah, conscience touching you up a bit, eh? Well, it's what you must expect, whilst you behave as you've done lately. O Sinclair, you've a great deal to answer for! You've brought desolation into a once-happy home, grief to a once-happy heart. Of course, it's right and proper that you should pay attention to the fair sex; their youth and beauty demand it; the honour of your regiment requires it; but you should not concentrate your attentions, my dear chap, you should not concentrate; they should be more general and less marked.'

But Jack was sulky as a bear with a sore head, and would have no argument on the subject, so Montagu was obliged to have it all to himself. Not that that had any effect on his tongue; he never let Jack rest a moment.

'Ah, you may well look so blue,' he would cry, 'with such a conscience as you must have—enough to give you blue-devils for the rest of your life! Think of the young affections you have blighted, think of the irreparable injury your heartless conduct has wrought, think of the gay hearth now made desolate, the light heart which will be light no more. Look at him, gentlemen,' appealing, after the manner of a counsel in a court of justice, to the grinning officers round about—'look at the depraved individual who stands before you, the male flirt. Ah, well, well, Sinclair, of all my sins, and they are many, I do not carry on my conscience the shameful weight of young fresh affections trifled with, won and thrown aside.'

Poor Jack! he met Dorothy often enough now. Dorothy always alone, with no Bryan Montagu in attendance, but with, O, such a blanched face, such a world of woe in the azure eyes, that if Jack had wished for revenge there it was. But Jack wished for nothing of the kind. The sight of his false love's white face only made him miserable, so utterly miserable that he could have fallen down upon his knees in the very street, and prayed her to try and look happier; he could have choked the very life out of Montagu as he sat sneering and jibing at the mess-table, only that would not give him back to Dorothy, or take away that piteous woe from her face. And then Montagu took his long leave, and Dorothy grew whiter and whiter, until at length

he missed her altogether, and feared she must be ill.

Once or twice he felt half inclined to ignore the past and go and see her, but the remembrance that she was fretting for Montagu kept him back; she wanted Montagu, and Jack Sinclair would be of no use; and so when his turn came for long leave he went away, sore at heart, as was ever Dorothy St. George, with hers breaking for the love of the man who bore the nickname of the Lady-Killer-in-Chief.

### CHAPTER III.

THE Cuirassiers had left Blankhampton for Colchester, *en route* for India, and Dorothy St. George had seen nothing more of her two lovers since the day that Jack Sinclair went away on long leave. True, Bryan Montagu had called twice; but Dorothy had not seen him, being indisposed—otherwise lying on her bed in the exhaustion which usually comes after violent weeping. Mr. Montagu had stayed half an hour each time, talking serenely with Mrs. St. George, and left, with graceful regrets that Miss St. George was not well enough to see him; and that had been all, that was the end. And yet she could not forget the past; she was not allowed to go out of the house, for a terrible cough had taken hold of her; she could not rest anywhere: she thought herself that she was going mad. As the year drew to a close, and the day fixed for the embarkation of the regiment drew near, she persuaded her mother to take a daily paper that she might see the latest, and indeed last, intelligence of them. She was not hard to persuade, for a great dread had come over her, lest her child, who was all she had in the world, should be taken from

her; and so for a time the paper was left at the house daily. The news about the Cuirassiers was but scanty, and Dorothy used to fling the paper down and sigh piteously each day, hoping that the next would tell more. And at last the sight of their own name caught her eye, and she for the first time looked at the paper with an interest unconnected with the Royal regiment of Cuirassiers.

'If this should meet the eye of Florence Meredith, who in September 18— was married in the parish church of Llangwylt, North Wales, by the Rev. David Meredith, to George St. George, gentleman, she is requested to communicate immediately with Messrs. Owen, Lucas, & Co., Gray's-inn-road, London, when she will hear of something to her advantage.'

Dorothy read it aloud to her mother.

'What does it mean?' she cried, thinking it might have something to do with—with—

'It is to say your father is dead,' Mrs. St. George replied, an ashen hue overspreading her face.

'And you will write?'

'At once,' she said, in a trembling voice. 'If he has relented, things may be very different for us.'

Two days passed by, and no reply came. Dorothy was wildly curious, fretfully impatient, and when on the second morning the postman passed the house, intensely disappointed.

'I believe it is a hoax,' she cried.

But it was not so. Towards noon an imperative knock resounded through the house, and the woman who had gone every day to help since Dorothy's illness ushered into the tiny sitting-room a small grave gentleman, clad in black, and with an irreproachable white neckcloth.

'Mrs. St. George?' he said, with a grave bow.

'Yes,' she answered rather faintly. 'Are you—'

'My name is Lucas. May I ask if this is your daughter?'

'That is Miss St. George,' she answered haughtily: the words 'your daughter' rather angered her.

'Pardon me,' said the little old gentleman politely, 'this lady,' taking Dorothy's hand and leading her a step forward, 'is the Countess of Beurivage. You are now the Countess Dowager;' at which theatrically-told piece of news Dorothy burst out laughing, and her mother sat down and quietly fainted away.

Not only had great honour come upon them, but also great wealth. The lately deceased earl had managed, shortly before his death, to pick a violent quarrel with the heir-presumptive, and to annoy him had left a will giving an exact account of his marriage and what had taken place since, and leaving every farthing he possessed to his daughter; his wife he left unnoticed, but then, as Dorothy said, it didn't much matter. And so the sailing of the Crocodile passed apparently out of mind.

The romantic story of the Earl of Beurivage's marriage and the succession of the beautiful young girl to the title was naturally enough wafted into all the papers. Those containing it were handed on board the Crocodile at Malta, and read almost simultaneously by the two men who had known Dorothy St. George most intimately in her days of poverty.

'Think what you've missed, Sinclair,' drawled Montagu. 'Who would have thought of little St. George turning out a countess in her own right? By Jove, it almost equals a novel!'

'I suppose you'll find it worth

while to go back and marry her now?' said Jack bitterly.

'Pooh! Not I! I amused myself with her; but as for marrying—' He did not finish the sentence, for Jack flew at him like a tiger, and flung him head-foremost down the companion-ladder; whence Mr. Bryan Montagu was picked up extensively bruised, and very careful to give Jack as wide a berth as was compatible with the capabilities of the ship.

'Curse you!' Jack shouted after him. 'I don't believe she would have you at any price!' And yet it puzzled him to guess why Dorothy had acted as she did.

One week the regiment remained, after landing, at a place called Deolalee; and when they went forward to Unapore, they marched without Mr. Bryan Montagu, who returned to England by the next steamer. He had seen enough of India during these seven days, he said; but Jack Sinclair always felt, with a thrill of satisfaction, that he had something to do with his return. He had not forgotten the time, not far distant, when Bryan Montagu had talked of the delights of India with what was nothing short of rapture.

---

#### CHAPTER IV.

THREE years passed away before Jack Sinclair returned to his native shores. He did so then because he had come into his inheritance; for his father had gone into that higher region where such things as earthly riches and troubles have no place. But he died, blessing Jack to the last; and Jack had been sent for, reaching his home, alas, too late.

And so he was no longer Jack

Sinclair the dragoon, troubled with numerous debts and other difficulties, but Sinclair of Cleve, the owner of a good estate, the head of a good county family. It was perfectly astonishing how nice every one seemed to find him. The self-same people who had looked very much askance at 'that dreadfully wild fellow, Jack Sinclair,' found out that, after all, young men will be young men, and that wild-oats are best sown. Some ladies even went so far as to affirm that the wildest young men make the best husbands. *Those* were ladies with marriageable daughters.

But they angled and baited their traps for him in vain. Jack would have none of them. His mother remained the undisturbed mistress of Cleve, and his sisters declared he must have left his heart in India.

Jack said, 'Exactly so,' and then they wondered why he hadn't married her. Effie suggested that perhaps she was married already; but the more strong-minded Laura scouted that idea altogether. She was sure Jack would not be such a fool as that. No, depend upon it, Jack did not feel altogether satisfied about her. Perhaps her family was not to his liking. That the lady might be unwilling, never entered their heads. Was not Jack—Sinclair—of Cleve, with seven thousand a year?

However, their conjectures brought them no nearer to the truth, since Jack turned a deaf ear to all their hints, and invariably answered them with the same word, 'Exactly.'

'You ought to marry,' Laura told him one day.

'Exactly,' said Jack easily.

'Then why don't you?' she asked. 'I'm sure you're in love.'

'Exactly.'

To say the least of it, the answer was discouraging.

However, in love or out of it, Jack did not change his condition. He went about in the character of an eligible bachelor, and seemed to find the position a very pleasant one; at least, he certainly made no attempt to alter it. He had returned from India in the summer, and during the autumn and winter seemed as if he was trying to make up for the society he had missed during his sojourn in the East. The family at Cleve saw but little of him until Christmas, when he remained at home a whole fortnight. At the end of that time he went northwards to pay a long-promised visit at the house of a man who was in the Cuirassiers when he first joined the regiment. He had a long and cold journey, arriving about an hour before dinner. Major Holroyd went out to the door to meet him, with a thousand apologies for not having been at the station, three miles away.

'The fact was, my bailiff came in just as I was starting; and as his business was urgent—roof of a cottage tumbled in, worse luck!—why, I was obliged to go round and make some arrangements for the family until it can be attended to,' he explained.

'It really did not matter,' Jack answered. 'How is Mrs. Holroyd? O, there you are!' as he followed his host into the inner hall. 'How are you? And how's our old friend, Ethel?'

'Grown a monster,' Mrs. Holroyd laughed. 'You'll see her presently, no doubt. You'll have a cup of tea, Captain Sinclair? I remember your old weakness for it. I think you must know every one here, excepting perhaps Lady Beaurivage.'

Jack turned from a young lady who was greeting him effusively

with a great start. Yes, there she was! The one love of his life. No longer pale, no longer with that look of hunted pain in her great azure eyes; but calm, smiling, self-possessed; and sitting near to her was Bryan Montagu. Jack determined, as he held out his hand with a grave bow, that his visit at Lark's Nest would be cut short on the following day by a plea of 'urgent private affairs.'

'Then you do know her?' Mrs. Holroyd cried, seeing the friendly yet half-distant salutation.

'I used to know Captain Sinclair,' answered Lady Beaurivage distinctly, 'very well indeed; but, for some reason or other, he cut me.'

'Dead as a door-nail,' Montagu affirmed.

'I cannot believe that,' cried Mrs. Holroyd emphatically.

'It is quite true,' answered Lady Beaurivage calmly; 'ask him if it is not so.'

'I won't ask you, Captain Sinclair, because I have too much faith in you to believe it,' said the hostess.

'Unfortunately, it is perfectly true,' Jack returned gravely.

'Why?' some one asked thoughtlessly.

'Why?' he repeated. 'O, you must get Lady Beaurivage to tell you that!' at which the young countess blushed so vividly crimson that every one laughed; and Mrs. Holroyd, to spare her further confusion, made a move, and carried her off to dress.

'Of course there's no truth in all that nonsense about your cutting her?' Major Holroyd asked, when he and Jack were left in possession of the hall.

'O yes, it's true enough,' Jack answered bitterly. 'If I'd known she was staying here I shouldn't have come, and as it is I think

I had better leave you to-morrow.'

'But what on earth has she done?'

'It was just this way: Lady Beaurivage was engaged to me, and jilted me—for Montagu. That's the whole story, Holroyd, and the less I see of her for the future the better.'

'Then why doesn't she marry Montagu?'

'Sure I don't know,' Jack returned forlornly.

'Because,' Major Holroyd continued, 'he has been running after her for three years, to my certain knowledge. He worships the very ground she walks on, and she always seems as if she detests him. To be sure, one never can tell what a woman is up to,' he ended; 'but at all events, Jack, I don't see that they need drive you away from us; you've done nothing to be ashamed of.'

'No, exactly,' Jack answered.

'Then you'll stay?'

'Yes, I'll stay,' holding out his hand and gripping his friend's hard, a display of feeling of which he repented instantly, and marched off up-stairs, wishing he hadn't made such a fool of himself. All the same Major Holroyd, standing staring reflectively into the fire, did not consider he had made a fool of himself at all.

'Queer concern that,' he muttered. 'I'll keep an eye upon them.'

So he did; but he learnt remarkably little. The intercourse between Lady Beaurivage and Mr. Montagu was exactly as it had been aforetime,—abject worship on his part, persistent snubbing on hers. Jack Sinclair kept aloof from both of them, and spent most of his time with small Ethel, a child of ten, who had been a great pet of his in the old days, before he fell in love with Dorothy

U U

St. George, otherwise Lady Beau-rivage—and time slipped on.

He came in one afternoon after a long day's hunting, tired and wet, having missed all the others and returned alone. Just as he reached the hall he saw Lady Beau-rivage, with three of the children clinging about her, coming down the stairs; and as he never met her, if by any chance he could possibly avoid her, he slipped into the library, thinking they would be going on to the drawing-room. A moment later, however, the door of the library opened, and the four, not seeing the red-coated figure in one of the deep window-seats, entered and went to the other end of the room, where was the fireplace. His first impulse was to get up and go away, but he could not do that without speaking to Dorothy, and if he did so Ethel would instantly entreat him to stay; therefore he remained where he was, almost hidden by the curtain, and listened patiently while Dorothy related a long fairy tale.

'And then they were married and lived happily ever after,' said the soft voice tenderly, bringing the story to an abrupt termination.

'Well, and what then?' Dick asked eagerly; 'what then, Dolly?'

'O, nothing more than that,' she answered, with a soft laugh; 'what more would you have?'

'People are always happy when they get married,' put in Ethel wisely.

'Who told you that?' Dorothy laughed.

'Captain Sinclair said so, because this morning I told him Jinks was going to be married, and he said, "Happy Jinks!" Would you like to be married, Dolly?'

'It would quite depend,' Dorothy said guardedly.

'If it was Mr. Montagu?' Ethel suggested.

'O no, not at all!' very emphatically.

'If it was Captain Sinclair? He's very nice, you know, Dolly.'

'Is he?'

'I like Captain Sinclair best of any one I know,' Ethel returned critically; 'and he's got the prettiest dressing-case I ever saw. And he's going to buy me a watch and chain when he goes back to town,—a real one, you know; so, Dick, you may have the old one mother's keeping for me. I say, Dolly, if it was Captain Sinclair?'

'Captain Sinclair would not have me,' said Lady Beau-rivage, with what sounded to Jack like a sigh.

'I'll ask him if you like,' Ethel cried obligingly.

'No, thank you,' with a genuine laugh.

'Tell us another story, Dolly, do,' put in Jim imploringly.

'Do you know that the bell has rung for the nursery-tea,' Lady Beau-rivage asked, 'and that you were promised some honey?'

'I forgot. Come, Dick, Ethel, let us go,' and away the three youngsters scampered, leaving the library to the other two occupants.

'And so they got married and lived happily ever after,' said one of them, moving forward into the firelight.

Lady Beau-rivage started violently, and jumped up from her seat.

'I did not know you were there,' she exclaimed confusedly, wondering anxiously if he had heard what Ethel said about himself.

'My little friend Ethel,' he said coolly, 'asked you if you would like to marry Montagu, and you said, "O no, not at all!" If it is not too impertinent, may I ask



why you did not give the same reply when she asked you another question?

Lady Beaurivage remained silent, and Jack continued :

'Would not the same reply have done? And how is it you have not married Montagu?'

'Ugh!' cried Lady Beaurivage, without much dignity, but with a very large amount of expression, at which Jack laughed out aloud. It might be that the laugh gave her courage, but certain it is that she put out her two pretty hands with an imploring gesture, and faltered, 'Don't be cross with me any more, Jack!' She seemed to have parted with her dignity altogether.

A heart of adamant must have melted before those azure eyes shining through a mist of tears;

and Jack's heart was not of an adamant quality, so far as Dorothy was concerned; and so somehow his arms found their way round her, and the golden head was pillowed on his breast.

'What did you do it for?' he asked after a while, without much regard for grammar.

And then she told him of the conversation she overheard, and how she had determined to pay the Lady-Killer out in his own coin, never considering that Jack would object.

'And I thought afterwards,' she stammered, 'that perhaps you only wanted an excuse to get out of it.'

'O my darling!' Jack cried reproachfully.

And so they were married, and lived happily ever afterwards.

---

### A SEAWEED SONG.

The '*Euplectella Speciosa*,' an exquisitely beautiful marine production of the Alcyonoid family, is found in the seas surrounding the Philippine Islands, and called by the natives '*Venus's flower-basket*.'

---

I SAID to Eugénie, the fairest of maidens,

'I visit to-morrow my seaside retreat.

O, tell me, I prithee, what gift may I venture  
On homeward returning to lay at thy feet?'

She smiled at my question, and laughingly answered,

'It rained on St. Swithin's, so be this thy task,  
To bring a barometer back from the ocean :  
A handful of seaweed is all that I ask.'

I wandered all day at the foot of the sea-cliffs,

O'er sands and o'er shingle and slimy rocks green ;

Alas, all in vain, for no weed I discovered

That fit was to lay at the feet of my queen.

*A Seaweed Song.*

At nightfall dejected I threw myself sadly  
 And wearily down at full length on the strand ;  
 The evening was balmy, the full moon shone brightly,  
 And bathed in its beams both the sea and the land.

On ocean's broad bosom a pathway of glory  
 Stretched out to the junction of water and sky,  
 Like Eugénie's tresses, reflecting the heavens,  
 Redoubling the splendour that shone from on high.

The violet hue of the arched vault above me,  
 Recalling her eyes, set my heart all aflame ;  
 The lover-like waves, as they wooed the coy shingle  
 With kisses and sighs, softly murmured her name.

But still I felt sad, when I thought empty-handed  
 To her I'd return ; so bewailing my fate,  
 I called upon Venus, fair goddess, to aid me,  
 And pity to take on my woe-begone state.

Scarcely breathed was the wish, when a wondrous commotion  
 Arose in the midst of the glory-lit way ;  
 And a fountain of gold, rising swift to the heavens,  
 Dissolved all at once into jewel-like spray.

From out of the mist shone a form like Eugénie's,  
 Its beauty celestial, a goddess confessed ;  
 Her voice, soft and low as the sigh of a zephyr,  
 In musical accents, me, awestruck, addressed :

'Behold in us, mortal, the Goddess of Beauty !  
 We heard thy sad plaint, borne to us on the breeze ;  
 The gift thou desirest we've torn from the coral  
 That builds in the depths of the warm southern seas.

Here, take to Eugénie, the maid who possesses  
 The girdle of beauty that long time was ours,  
 The last of the gifts left for Venus to offer  
 Her rival on earth—'tis her *basket of flowers*.'

Per

A. E. G. V  
 C  
 O  
 P  
 CT  
 S  
 T  
 A  
 SH  
 CAFE

